



**Timothy John
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Representações culturais e virtuais do sistema negocial Português

Virtual cultural representations of the Portuguese business system

palavras-chave

representações culturais, comunidade discursiva, Internet, comunicação intercultural, comunidade negocial

resumo

O presente trabalho propõe-se abordar a descrição das representações culturais existentes numa comunidade discursiva virtual, que utiliza a língua inglesa e que foca os aspectos do sistema empresarial e negocial Português. Procura identificar e descrever estas representações culturais, utilizando uma metodologia etnográfica e técnicas de análise de discurso, representações essas que são comparadas com as existentes nos membros de um subgrupo da comunidade empresarial alvo, constituída por alunos de línguas e relações empresariais. Esta comparação tem como objectivo pedagógico a elaboração de recomendações para conteúdos programáticos.

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cultural representations, discourse community, internet, intercultural communication, business community

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This dissertation addresses the description of the cultural representations held by an English language online discourse community centred on the Portuguese business system. It seeks to identify and describe these cultural representations, using an ethnographic methodology and discourse analysis techniques. These representations are then compared with those held by members of a sub-group of the target business community consisting of students of language and business skills. This comparison has the pedagogical objective of producing recommendations for syllabus content.



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Dissertação apresentada à Universidade de Aveiro para cumprimento dos requisitos necessários à obtenção do grau de Mestre em Estudos Ingleses, realizada sob a orientação científica da Professora Doutora Gillian Moreira, Professora Auxiliar do Departamento de Línguas e Culturas da Universidade de Aveiro

Dedico este trabalho à minha esposa, Eugénia, aos meus filhos, Lara e Julian, pelo incansável apoio e paciência e também aos meus pais pelo incentivo sustentado ao longo de muitos anos.

o júri

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1 Introduction

This study is concerned with the degree to which intercultural communication is facilitated or hampered by the understanding that members of one cultural group have of members of a different cultural group when this understanding has largely been derived from information found on the Internet.

1.1 Relevancy of Study

The motivation to investigate this particular area originated with the researcher's needs, as a teacher of language and culture, to improve the language teaching programme in terms of syllabus content. These needs, as determined by the teaching environment, are specific in nature and this has helped to shape the precise form of the study. Therefore, the study concerns itself, in a general way, with the teaching methodology and course content employed in the area of intercultural competence skills for a group of Portuguese students following a course in foreign languages and business studies (Línguas e Relações Empresariais) at the University of Aveiro.

Most of the students on this course see English as the language that they are likely to use most in future business-oriented professional contacts. In many cases these contacts will involve an element of negotiation and the use of negotiational strategies and tactics. Fundamental to the employment of the appropriate strategy will be both the level of understanding and correct anticipation of those cultural factors influencing the negotiating style of the counterparts to the process. An important factor in this will be the understandings and attitudes, organised nationally and professionally, that a negotiator has in relation to the customs and behaviours likely to be exhibited by negotiation counterparts. These understandings and attitudes will be used in a very practical way to guide behaviour during the negotiation process.

Portugal is currently heavily reliant on inward foreign investment (ICEP 2003) which, together with tourism, account for the students' expectations that in their future professional lives they are much more likely to be in the position of dealing with visitors to Portugal than going abroad themselves. Some of these visitors will have been to Portugal before, some will not. Many may have prepared for their trip by researching Portuguese cultural practices in the business environment and will so feel prepared to encounter and take part in some of these. Their research will have guided not just their behaviour in terms of direct interaction and socialising with their hosts but will also underpin their strategy and tactics in the negotiation process itself. One possibility is that these visiting counterparts will be seeking to select an advantageous strategy based

upon their understanding of the Portuguese business community's culturally-oriented behaviours. A second possibility is that both communities, the Portugal-based business people and their foreign visitors, will be striving to achieve maximum mutual understanding of each other's positions as quickly as possible with a view to concluding negotiations to the greatest possible satisfaction for both sides. The efficient identification of negotiating positions will be accessed through analysis and understanding of the behaviours exhibited by the counterparts. Such analysis will take place on the basis of a specific negotiating environment as well as the preconceptions and expectations that the negotiators bring to the intercultural encounter. In the case of students preparing for such encounters, at least part of their pre-encounter understandings of the nature of the intercultural exchange is based on the learning processes they follow on their university degree course.

The focus on intercultural competence of the students on this course has involved a number of strands including:

- Self-image and the projection of image
- Stereotypes of behaviour, custom and beliefs
- Appropriate behaviours to adopt
- Dealing with misunderstanding
- Repair strategies

As the students on this course are all Portuguese and are studying specific other languages (English, Chinese or Arabic and French, Spanish or German) the main focus has tended to be on behaviours, customs and attitudes of peoples from countries where these languages are spoken, as well as a few other European countries.

In terms of pedagogical approach, many courses of this type seek to prepare students by including material and activities designed to illustrate and encapsulate the characteristics of members of other cultures by presenting the students with what are essentially stereotyped images of these cultures. See for example Cotton et al. (2001) and Rodgers (1998). Thus, in course books such as these, students may be made aware of Japanese business card exchange protocol or the attitude in France to discussing business during meals. While this information may be useful there are two essential elements which tend to be missing. The first of these is how the home culture, in this case Portuguese, is viewed by the others, without the filter of the author of the course materials, while the second concerns the process of selecting which information should guide behaviour and how.

Information about how others view one's own culture is unlikely to be recorded in a course book unless it happens to be an illustrative case, selected by the author, like the ones mentioned in the previous paragraph. In any case the author/publisher filters involved may rob the information of much of its usability, because of the situation and context in which the author writes and because the information is usually presented in the form of single text in order to allow language work to take place in the classroom.

The second element is more complicated since students are not generally content to know how another culture operates but are more interested in acquiring appropriate competencies for successful interaction with that culture. One can imagine situations in which an intercultural encounter is unsuccessful as both parties try to imitate each other's cultural practices when meeting. On a simple level, such as the exchange of business cards, this would probably not constitute awkwardness or cultural incompetence and may actually help to improve the communication by demonstrating the level of preparation that has gone into the encounter. At a more complex level, however, such as the use of silence in mid-negotiation or the value of agreement utterances, not knowing if your counterpart is using a tactic with a significance natural to themselves or if they are trying to imitate what they believe you would do in the same situation can obviously lead to significant misunderstanding as to what is actually being communicated. Business people have evolved a number of systems for dealing with this type of problem. These include, for example, the use of bicultural intermediaries, reliance on the written contract, delayed decision making and the extensive use of verbal clarification strategies in negotiation. There is also a tendency to adhere to the adage of 'when in Rome ...' The practical implications of this are that when visiting another country on business the onus is often on the visitor to come well prepared in terms of understanding of and willingness to engage in local business practices. This willingness will, naturally, be mediated by the relevant positions between the parties to the negotiations, with those in a position of power more likely to dictate the format and style of the negotiations.

In many cases, therefore, the foreign business visitor will have done some research into the ways in which business is done in Portugal and will come feeling prepared for the intercultural encounter with a range of expectations as to how the Portuguese business community behaves. The receiving members of the business community may also have researched their visitors' perceived behaviours and formed their own expectations as to likely behaviour patterns during the intercultural encounter. It is less likely that either side will have such a clear idea as to how they are perceived by the other. That is, the Portuguese business person may not have considered the type of behaviours that the

visitor is expecting. In any such future business-oriented encounters, it will be advantageous for the students on this course to be able to predict what the “other side” brings to the meeting, what preconceptions and expectations they have in relation to the behaviours and attitudes that the Portuguese interactants might have. This knowledge would furnish Portuguese students with a valuable negotiating tool in that they would be able to more easily determine their counterparts’ underlying strategy as well as predict the tactics they are likely to bring into play.

There is a further important dimension to the social use to which information about other cultures might be put in an intercultural encounter and this concerns the perceived validity of the information. If the foreign visitors to Portugal find that the social consequences, the behaviours, of the members of the host community conform completely, or malleably, to their expectations then their understandings will be reinforced. If, on the other hand, the behaviours appear to be incompatible with their expectations then their understandings will suffer more significant alterations. In other words, these understandings are necessarily flexible and in a fairly constant state of flux. From the practical point of view of wishing to conduct business negotiations as efficiently and comfortably as possible, the less change to expectations the more successful the encounter will seem to be from the point of view of both parties. Consequently the proven or provable validity of the information, in terms of its reliability, is of crucial importance to the process of intercultural encounter. The less culture shock suffered by both sides, the smoother the encounter will proceed.

If it were the case that the information available to foreign visitors could be seen to lead to the formation of specific understandings of and attitudes towards the Portuguese business system which were identical or at least similar to the representations and attitudes that the students have of themselves or think others have, then there would be little need for special preparation in the classroom in this area. If, however, others do not see the Portuguese as either the Portuguese see themselves or as they think others see them then the students will need this knowledge in order to prepare successfully for any type of intercultural business negotiations and it should form part of the methodology of the course. It is against this background that this study has been developed.

1.2 Study Focus

1.2.1 Subject Communities

There are three cultural groupings at the centre of this investigation. The first cultural group is defined as a discourse community to which members belong by virtue of being

authors or consumers of online texts in English relating to the business practices and business-related behaviours of the business community in Portugal. The second cultural group is that in which members form part of the community of business people or people working in businesses in Portugal who have experienced intercultural encounters with the author members of the first group. The majority of the members of this second group are largely assumed to be Portuguese, but may not be identifiable as such. This second cultural group is the object of the discourse practised by the first group in that the discourse community addresses itself to their understandings of the culturally-oriented behaviours of the business community in Portugal. The third cultural grouping comprises the students who are nascent or potential future members of the second group, the business community in Portugal, and who, therefore, currently occupy a position as sub-group to this second group.

1.2.2 Study Objectives

The main objective of the study is first to determine if culturally-oriented understandings of the Portuguese business community are identifiable and extractable from online texts. If this should prove to be the case then the second phase is to classify these understandings in such a way that they can be compared with understandings that members of the Portuguese business community have of themselves.

There are a number of lines of inquiry that can be considered relevant to this investigation. The first of these concerns the nature of the understandings and attitudes that members of one culture might have about another and how these understandings or meanings come into being through the processes of meaning-making, cultural representations and stereotyping. The second area of inquiry concerns the nature of the Internet itself and how it operates as a channel of communication or medium of discourse via which meaning is made in a discourse between online authors and online readers. Also relevant here is the way in which the Internet itself is a cultural artefact and that it has been subject to processes of socialisation of use.

The overall focus of the study is to investigate how these areas of inquiry come together to show how specific conditions might be created under which intercultural communication then takes place. These specific conditions refer to the level and quality of preparedness of the members of the first discourse community for a possible intercultural encounter. The measurement of this preparedness is made through a comparison of the understandings, in terms of cultural representations and attitudes that the members of the discourse community have of the members of the other, Portuguese business, culture with a survey of the understandings that a sub-group of members of the culture have of themselves.

1.2.3 Assumptions Made in the Study

There are a number of premises underlying the approach taken here. The first of these concerns the nature of intercultural business encounters and the need for workable understandings of the behaviours of one's counterparts. This study takes the position that a useful and predictable understanding of the behaviours of one's counterparts can be enhanced by a knowledge of the understandings that the counterparts have of oneself. Furthermore, these understandings can be accessed, analysed and subsequently taught through following an information-gathering paradigm which imitates that which a member of the counterpart culture may have gone through.

A second premise relates to the nature of the Internet itself. Today's Internet is a ubiquitous influence which permeates many of the activities and functions we carry out in our daily lives. It is a space, a channel and a tool people use to live, work and play in. We use it to communicate directly and indirectly, synchronously and asynchronously with each other in ways, to purposes and to an extent that has not been previously possible. This study is concerned with the Internet as an information source, a channel and medium of communication and a cultural space, a place in which culturally-oriented meaning can be communicated, extracted, negotiated, and potentially agreed, through a process of textual information retrieval. The premise of this study, then, is that the Internet can and does function as a cultural space in which meaning is created by and between members of a discourse community. This, in turn, has entailed a focus on the type of meaning that is embedded in messages about cultural and business practice which are intended to be picked up, interpreted and assimilated through online information retrieval techniques.

Another premise underlying this study is that the Internet, as a medium, through which information may be gathered and meaning made, leads to qualitatively different outcomes when compared to more traditional sources of information from other discourse communities, such as printed books, and so is worthy in itself as a defining characteristic of the study. Part of this difference may be due to the specific information and meaning content generated by this particular discourse community which could not exist in another medium. Another part for the difference may be due to the nature of the channel of the communication itself. For example, in a face to face conversational encounter between two members of the same discourse community, meaning is negotiated using all the available parameters including mental frames of the situation, identity knowledge, contextual conditioners, deixis and paralinguistic devices together with the cross-referencing of all of these. Virtual communication in general is very different as many of these aids to communication, and the subsequent successful

negotiation of meaning, are absent. The precise degree to which they are absent, and the form of communication is different, will largely depend on the virtual mode of communication employed. This may be a chat room, a discussion list or bulletin board, in a virtual avatar-based community, by e-mail or through Web pages. Each of these different modes has its own particular characteristics in terms of both the nature of the communication and the make-up of the discourse community. As a result of this plurality of characteristics, and in order to facilitate analysis, this study addresses only one of these modes, that of web pages. These pages are similar to but different from printed text in content and in the meaning-making processes they engender. These similarities and differences are also addressed in this study.

No empirical comparison will be made between information and meaning gathered from the Internet and other sources. Instead, the meanings made through discourse on the Internet will be compared with the meanings understood by members of the Portuguese business community, who are the topic subject of the discourse community, in an attempt to discover the level of match or mismatch. This comparison will then enable conclusions to be drawn about both the level of preparedness of business visitors to Portugal for what they will find here and the level of preparedness of the local business community for dealing with the expectations held by visitors from other cultures.

Other factors to consider in a full description include the identities, motivations and socially-oriented functions employed by the discourse community, particularly the authors of online text. Meaning encoded in the text on web pages, whether through the medium of written text, graphics, video or sound, will have been encoded by the authors for a wide variety of purposes and intentions but always within their own cultural frame of reference. That is, the process of encoding meaning will reflect the particular cultural environment within which they live their everyday lives, including their experiential record of their interaction with the Portuguese business community. The cultural frame within which pages are written may be implicitly recognisable in the contents of the page but, via the mechanisms of anonymity commonly used on the Internet, may not be made explicit or detailed to the consumer of the information. Given that this is the case, the analysis of the texts in question takes into account the anonymity of identity, and therefore the anonymity of experience, of online authors. It does this by using text analysis tools that attempt to distinguish between, for example, experientially-based observations and purely speculative opinion in the texts.

In terms of the consumers of the online texts, the web pages will most typically have been designed with either a very wide group of readers or no specific audience in mind. This component of the discourse community is defined by their need to search, in

English, for business community behaviour information in the context of Portugal. As the members of this information-seeking community are unknown to the researcher, and not easily identifiable, careful consideration must be given to the methodology used to study their consumption of online text.

1.2.4 Study Methodological Approach

One possible methodological approach would be to set up a large scale study of the consumption of Web pages by a known group of consumers. This would be a major undertaking beyond the resource scope of the present study. Moreover, and given the highly individualistic nature of Internet-based information consumption, with each consumer interpreting the information in a frame determined by their own cultural boundaries, it is also valid to propose a different methodology, based upon an approach which is essentially ethnographic in nature. In this approach the researcher becomes a member of the discourse community itself. This involves following the same pattern of information-seeking behaviour that such a member might exhibit.

There are several characteristics of information-seeking behaviour which need to be taken into consideration. Firstly, the consumer of information originating in online text may be forced to accept all the information at face value, or alternatively reject it all. If there is no mechanism within the message for verification of authenticity and identity and no obvious reason to reject the whole message, then the wholly objective message receiver would be likely to treat all such messages as being equal in value. Issues of the validity value of Internet-based information are also discussed in this study but the general approach taken is that anonymous information sources are taken at equal face value and that the method of sampling of web sites for analysis follows an acceptable set of validity criteria.

Secondly, the information consumers are also interpreting the information within their own particular frame of cultural reference. This frame of reference is built up from a number of cultural vectors, including the practices and beliefs of the various cultural groups to which the consumers belong, their previous experience of the information, their intercultural interaction with the Internet medium itself, their intentions and expectations in interacting with the information and, in the case of information which is representational of other cultural groupings, the nature and fixedness of any stereotypical images they may hold. A sampling of a significantly-sized consumer group would produce a study with a very large range of culturally-specific variables to analyse. This again is beyond the scope of the present study and is another reason why the researcher has decided to follow the path of becoming a member of the discourse community.

In summary, any cultural representations or stereotypes of the Portuguese business community suggested by the online texts will be drawn out so that they can then be compared with the representations that the students already have of themselves as well as those that they feel others have of them. If there are differences between the understandings that are accessible on the Internet and what the students feel, then there is the potential for quite a large intercultural gap in any dealings the students may have with members of other cultures, thus making it harder to create any type of successful environment in which an intercultural encounter could proceed. Alternatively, by introducing reflection on these differences into the classroom it is to be hoped that the Portuguese students' intercultural competence will be improved to such a point that the creation of a working business negotiation environment will be easier. The academic examination of intercultural business encounters in general is not a new area, but the present study proposes a small addition to this body of knowledge through a consideration of the particular way in which intercultural encounters may be affected by the use of the Internet as an information source in the creation of pre-encounter expectations by both parties to those negotiations.

1.3 Research Questions

The main objective of this study is, firstly, to discover if it is possible to extract a describable set of cultural representations or understandings and affective orientations relating to the Portuguese, Portugal and doing business in Portugal from online web page discourse produced in English. A second main objective is to discover if such online representations are similar to or different from the representations that the members of this Portuguese community believe to be true of themselves or believe to be held by others about themselves.

The main project outcome would be to produce and compare these descriptions. There is a functional pedagogical reason for this since the differences in representational description should provide the content basis for a module or unit on a business English language course which includes a focus on business culture and intercultural competence. The unit would aim to inform and prepare students for how people outside the culture understand the cultural aspects of doing business in Portugal and with the Portuguese. Moreover, it would enable the Portuguese students of business to better prepare for such intercultural encounters in their future professional careers.

These objectives and the outcome will be achieved through answering the following research questions:

1.3.1 First Main Research Question

How are the Portuguese, Portugal and doing business in Portugal represented in the English language electronic media, specifically on text-based web pages?

Relevant sub-topic questions and areas of concern that need to be addressed in order to fully answer this main question and define the parameters of the answer to it include the following:

- What kinds of sites make reference to business in Portugal? Can these sites be categorised by genre or will some other form of classification be necessary so as to draw more coherent and precise conclusions about the nature of what is believed about the Portuguese? It may be the case that the cultural representations of the Portuguese business community are more numerous and accessible in certain types of site containing certain types of discourse. A suitable system of discourse classification will help answer this question.
- How is reference to cultural behaviours, beliefs and competences encoded in the text by the author? Are cultural representations of the Portuguese clearly marked as such, is attitude expressed and is this related to stated experience?
- Can the information and meaning pertaining to cultural representation be extracted from the source? How does the reader extract such information and how is meaning made? What degree, if any, of communication between author and reader is involved? Is the consumer of online discourse simply information-harvesting or is there a process of communication, shared or negotiated meaning-making and text-building that takes place between author and reader?
- What is the level of confidence that consumers of online discourse invest in the information that is extracted? If the information, whether factual or cultural in nature, has a high level of trustworthiness then it may be assumed that it will be put to practical use by the consumer, in this case the business person travelling abroad.
- Can information about Portugal be separated from information about other Portuguese speaking countries and/or Portuguese communities living in other countries? There is a significant Portuguese Diaspora with many expatriates living in English-speaking countries. Rocha-Trindade (retrieved 2004) indicates that approximately 1.6 million Portuguese migrants (or about 35% of the total Portuguese migrant population) live in English-speaking countries which include the USA, Canada, South Africa, the UK and Australia. This will obviously influence the results of the study in that these expatriates, who, in most cases, will

not be identifiable as such, may occupy a position somewhere between the self and the other.

- Are there are a sufficient number of sources to make generalisations about cultural representations of the Portuguese?

1.3.2 Second Main Research Question

To what extent will this information be of use to students, as measured against the self-image that they have? This question assumes that, were the results of the Internet survey to coincide with the students' self-image, there would be very little point in turning the results into a teaching syllabus since there would be little or nothing to learn. If the results indicate a clear difference between the understandings resulting from the survey of the Internet texts and the students' self image, is it possible to summarise or present this information in a form that could be included in an intercultural competence teaching unit on a Business English language and culture course?

Relevant sub-topic questions and areas of concern that need to be addressed in order to fully answer this main question, and define the parameters of the answer to it include the following:

- What self-image or image of Portugal, the Portuguese and doing business in Portugal do the students have? Although they are not actively involved in business, they not only have access to general cultural information, as acquired through newspapers and television, but are also following specific business education subjects in the areas of business management, marketing and the culture of organisations.
- What image of Portugal, the Portuguese and doing business in Portugal do the students think those from other cultures have? Again, the students will tend not to have had much direct experience of what the members of other business-related cultures think about the Portuguese. However, they will have access to foreign news, current affairs and documentary television programmes and printed media, and not just in English. A significant number of the students were born or brought up in other countries such as France, Germany, the USA, Canada, South Africa and the UK and still maintain strong contacts with friends and family in these countries. These cross-cultural living, communicative and informational experiences will have helped them to become aware of differing opinions and attitudes towards Portuguese business culture.
- If the understandings revealed in the text analysis are essentially homogenous,

what generalisations can be made and how could they be put into a concise and teachable form? This implies a process of selection in which unnecessary information would be filtered out of such a syllabus. To do this it will be necessary to subtract from the total number and type of understandings and attitudes found in the online discourse those that the students are familiar with and believe that members of other cultures already hold in relation to the Portuguese business system.

These are the questions and secondary questions that it may be possible to address in this study. However, it is also entirely possible that the study itself will reveal that some of the questions, particularly those of detail, are unanswerable or obscured by the nature of the object of the study, the Internet itself, and the basic methodology of at-distance ethnography that has been employed.

2 Theoretical Framework

2.1 Culture, Representations, Language and the Construction of Meaning

In order to proceed with a study of this kind it is first of all necessary to clarify the theoretical orientations which underpin the concepts discussed as well as those which validate the premises and methodologies employed. This section, therefore, attempts to construct a theoretical framework from within which the study can be viewed.

The first sub-section looks at the nature of intercultural encounters and intercultural competences within the general business context. Intercultural communication is central to the study in that both the consumers of online information related to the activities and behaviours of the Portuguese business community and the student members of this community are assumed to be preparing for just this type of communication.

A discussion of intercultural communication presupposes a specific view of culture itself and this is addressed in the second sub-section in which a definition of culture as it is understood in this study will be drawn up. This definition is then used to characterise the groups of people involved in the case study in order to ascertain not just who is involved but how people and behaviours are grouped and organised. This discussion of culture includes reference to the importance of difference in determining culture and the question of definition of oneself and one's own culture in comparison with the definition of the culture of others. The nature of identity, and its influence on culture and communication between cultures, is a sub-theme which runs across a number of the major topics discussed. A workable definition and description of specific cultural groupings and their identities enables the study to comment on and predict the manner in which intercultural encounters and communication between groups might proceed.

A second area of theoretical considerations addresses, in greater detail, the question of understandings and attitudes relating to both oneself and other cultures. The nature of these understandings, in terms of meaning and communication of meaning, is discussed, together with the processes by which they are constructed. Consideration is given to the precise form that they take, where they are created and how they interact with each other in terms of not just our everyday behaviours but specifically those that are expressed in the general environment of intercultural encounters. The relationship between understandings and culture is explored through examining the way in which the sharing of understandings determines culture and vice versa. Another substantial consideration concerns the actual method of communication of our understandings through the medium of language. This includes a discussion of the relationship between

concepts and language and the interplay of the two in the formation of meaning. The processes of meaning-making serve as a guide as to how the readers of texts come to make meaning as regards their understandings of the communities and cultures to which they belong and others to which they don't. Included in this section is a discussion of the nature of the relationship between authors, and specifically online authors, and their readers in terms of both identity and communication practices. The processes through which our understandings guide our behaviours are discussed, with particular reference to the formation of stereotypes and the social uses to which they are put.

Another broad theme which is important to a general overview of how understandings influence behaviour concerns the specific mode of communication employed in the construction of those understandings. In this case, this means a focus on the Internet. An overview of the nature of the Internet looks at how we interact with it as a technology, that is as a cultural object, as a mode of communication and as a repository of information and how all of these facets affect the way that we use it socially. The way in which these qualities of the Internet interact with each other is also considered with an emphasis on the manner in which the technology affects our behaviours.

The nature of the relationship between the members of the discourse community who are taking on the roles of producer and/or consumers of online text is also focussed on, as is the way in which these roles might overlap. Such an overlap also bears on the social usability of the information retrieved in terms of its validity and applicability. The methods and processes of information retrieval in the particular context of Internet searches are also considered as they bear on the nature of the information that is retrieved and, consequently, the uses to which it is put.

This theoretical framework will serve to guide the particular methodological path taken in the empirical part of the study, particularly in terms of the ethnographic approach taken to the study of the discourse community and the discourse analysis of the texts that they produce.

2.1.1 Intercultural Communication

The central focus of this study is on the predisposing mechanisms, in the form of preparatory research activities, that may help to determine how people from specifically different cultural groupings might behave towards each other in encounter situations. Lustig and Koester (2002) emphasise that encounters of this kind are marked by the differences that exist between people when defining intercultural communication as:

a symbolic, interpretive, transactional, contextual process in which the degree of difference between people is large and important enough to create dissimilar interpretations and expectations about what are regarded as competent behaviors that should be used to create shared meanings. (Lustig & Koester, 2002: 51)

Intercultural communication involves, then, an interpretative process of making shared meaning despite the difficulties imposed by the differences in culture of the parties involved.

Ting-Toomey (1988 & 1999) proposes three types of cultural barrier, or difficulty, to cross-cultural communication. The first of these are cognitive constraints which are concerned with the different ways in which people frame or reference their view of the world. In an intercultural encounter new information is inserted into and must fit within these frames. The second type of barrier is formed by behaviour constraints, these are based on the culture-specific rules regarding what is and isn't appropriate behaviour. The third barrier is constructed by emotional constraints, these being the culture-specific regulation of displays of emotion.

These barriers are not deliberate constructions designed to frustrate communication but, as pointed out by Ting-Toomey (1999, p22), are due to "well-meaning" clashes in which each participant is simply behaving according to the norms set by their own cultural orientation. They exist because of differences between cultures, and people taking part in intercultural encounters may prepare themselves for overcoming these barriers by learning and being taught about the other culture before the encounter takes place. As Labour et al. (2000) put it:

To help prevent such miscommunication, participants of intercultural communities may have to be encouraged to better understand the implications of working with people from diverse backgrounds. This understanding involves recognising that there exist other human qualities outside the group to which a person belongs. (Labour et al., 2000: online)

2.1.2 Views of Culture

The precise nature of the differences that exist in intercultural communication can only be practically determined if culture is understood as a concept which is both anthropological and social in nature.

In the purely anthropological sense, Chang (1999) has summarised the 'culture as homogeneity within a physically defined group' approach as consisting of three strands:

(1) a culture is viewed as a bounded system which is separate and distinguishable from others;

(2) a culture is expected to be "homogeneous"

(3) a culture is expected to be shared by members of the society.

(Chang, 1999, online)

In this view, culture is virtually synonymous with ethnicity and nationality in that it represents an ethno-physiological view of how culture is structured. The Portuguese living in Portugal are, anthropologically, a delimited cultural group. This essentialist approach holds that cultures can be specifically and particularly described and defined and that there is a high level of homogeneity within a culture which allows such description.

As Tittle (1996:1) has pointed out, this type of account is over-simplistic, because '*the relationships between race, religion, nation, and culture are neither exclusive nor exhaustive*', although it provides a starting point for understanding the role of culture in communication across differences. For a more complete picture, it is necessary to take into consideration questions of flux, instability, diversification and transformation. These are changes in groups of people that are socially organised and culture is a concept that is socially-determined. The more encompassing constructivist approach to thinking about culture holds that culture is constructed through our everyday actions and interactions. Culture is a socially constructed concept in that it can be thought of as an associative network of ideas, values, beliefs; these are our cultural meaning systems, which guide an individual's interpretation of their social environment. As Fiske (2002) puts it:

A culture is a socially transmitted or socially constructed constellation consisting of such things as practices, competencies, ideas, schemes, symbols, values, norms, institutions, goals, constitutive rules, artifacts, and modifications of the physical environment. (Fiske, 2002:85)

In a more detailed manner, and making a distinction that clarifies the interaction between culture and our everyday behaviours, Geertz (1973) states that:

culture is best seen not as complex of concrete behavior patterns, but as a set of control mechanisms, plans, recipes, rules, instructions (what computer engineers call "programs") for the governing of behavior (p.44, 1973 ed. (Geertz, 1973).

This is how the business community in general sees culture; as a behavioural

component of the practical task of communicating with others in pursuance of their professional activities (Salacuse, 1999; Faure, 1999; Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2002). It is also, thus, the definition of culture which can guide a study into the nature of the representations of this culture in both the online texts and the student sub-group of the community.

Culture is socially organised. It operates at both the individual and the group level. At the group level, it is shared between members of the group and is passed from one member to another. Thus, although the group may be constantly changing, and though culture itself also evolves across time, there are constants in culture, that, and at least in the short term, are observable and analysable. de Mooij summarises this interaction of group and individual in the following way:

Individuals are products of their culture; they are conditioned by their sociocultural environment to act in certain manners. Culture includes the things that have “worked” in the past. It includes shared beliefs, attitudes, norms, roles, and values found among speakers of a particular language who live during the same historical period in a specific geographic region. These shared elements of subjective culture are usually transferred from generation to generation. Language, time, and place help define culture. Culture is to society what memory is to individuals. (de Mooij, 2005:36)

As culture is manifested in behaviour, belief and attitude, observing and recording these characteristics of culture leading to analysis of underlying patterns will allow some access to the system of beliefs and world views which make up the culture itself. This knowledge would allow the person engaged in intercultural communication to predict and prepare for the behaviours, and underlying cultural norms, exhibited by members of the other culture in the intercultural encounter. The concept of culture is applicable to all groupings that share these characteristics of attitudes, norms and world views, and not just national or linguistic groups. de Mooij continues:

The term culture may apply to ethnic or national groups, or to groups within a society, at different levels: a country, an age-group, a profession, or a social class. The cultural programming of an individual depends on the groups or categories to which he or she belongs. The expressions of culture belonging to a certain level of cultural programming will differ: Eating habits may differ by country, dress habits by profession, and gender roles by both country and social class. (de Mooij, 2005:36)

A cultural group may, thus, be defined according to a number of criteria, including

nationality, language, geography, professional field and specific professional activity. To ensure the production of acceptable behaviours, culture, as a system, is dependent on shared understanding of what the guiding rules of behaviour are. These rules, in turn, depend on members of the same culture sharing the same understanding of the world around them. People have the same culture if they conceptualise the world in the same way, hold the same beliefs about how it operates and are able to communicate these concepts between members of the same culture.

In the case of this study, the cultural group which is focussed on is defined by three of these levels; Portuguese nationality, Portugal as a physical location and being a member of a profession involved in any form of business which involves contact with people from other cultural groups that are differently defined.

2.1.3 Culture, Language, Representations, Meaning & Discourse

The behaviours that members of one cultural group may exhibit towards members of another group in an intercultural encounter will depend to a large extent on assumptions about shared understandings and world views and the successful or otherwise communication of these views through the use of language.

Hall (1997a) gives a clear account of the relationship between mental concepts, culture, the 'real world', socialisation and communication processes which are brought together in the process of representation:

Representation is the production of the meaning in our minds through language. It is the link between concepts and language which enables us to refer to either the 'real' world of objects, people or events, or indeed to the imaginary worlds of fictional objects, people and events. (Hall, 1997a: 17)

Representation consists of two component systems (du Gay, 1997). There is, first of all, the system of 'mental representations' within which everything which we experience in the world is correlated with its respective concept in our minds. It is an interiorisation of the way in which we translate sensual experience into thought, emotion and attitude. We organise, classify and arrange component concepts in order to generate an interior network that is as interlinked as the world we perceive.

The second representational system is that of language in the sense of a system of signs in which each sign represents or correlates with a particular interior concept or set of concepts. Language is a second means, beyond that that of direct sensual experience, by which concepts can be created, modified and shared. It is also instrumental in the regulation of behaviours and so has an important social dimension. The relationship

between mental representations and language is complex and mental concepts may or may not be interiorised in linguistic terms (Sperber & Wilson, 1998; Hoppenbrouwers, 2000). However, and for the purposes of this study, the relevant relationship between the two is that of the use of language for the communication of concepts between people.

The shared but interiorised knowledge, or world-view, that we have as members of the same culture is built up, negotiated and reformulated through communication processes which make use of the medium of language. Without language to act as a mediator and channel for the concepts that we hold, we would live in a state of constant uncertainty about not only our beliefs regarding the world but also the subsequent guides to our behaviours and interactions with others.

There is a symbiotic but somewhat unclear relationship between culture and language. In a general sense language is both a reflection of the way we look at the world and a controlling factor in the same process, as summarised by Kerényi (1976)

The interdependence of thought and speech makes it clear that languages are not so much a means of expressing truth that has already been established as means of discovering truth that was previously unknown. Their diversity is a diversity not of sounds and signs but of ways of looking at the world. Kerényi (1976: 3)

There are widely ranging views (Whorf & Carroll, 1964; Lucy, 1992; Bloom et al., 1996; Gumperz & Levinson, 1996) as to how language and culture interact. These are spread along a spectrum from linguistic relativity in which different languages reflect different world-views and thought processes to linguistic determinism in which language has the ability to impose and create thought and mental conceptualisation. The view taken in this study is that language tends to be a facilitator and reflector of the mental processes that shape our world view although it may also be a determiner of them. As Whorf (1964: 214) put it:

We are thus introduced to a new principle of relativity, which holds that all observers are not led by the same physical evidence to the same picture of the universe, unless their linguistic backgrounds are similar, or can in some way be calibrated. ...The relativity of all conceptual systems, ours included, and their dependence upon language stand revealed (Whorf, 1964:214, in Swoyer, 2003).

Language, then, both reflects and shapes our internal world views and, consequently, in its role as a vehicle of communication, our interactions with others. Analysing individual expression of language enables us to access the underlying world view of the

members of a particular culture.

Language is representational: meaning is created from language through a process of representation or reference. Representations make concepts communicable by providing a fixed link between concepts and language forms. Meaning here is understood as the realisation of those internalised concepts that enable us to make sense of the world and act within it, as well as to communicate these concepts to others in discourse. There are several different locations of meaning in discourse, one of which is in the language itself. The author or speaker produces meaning in the world by directly and intentionally encoding this meaning into the language forms itself (Hall, 1997a). Our intentions and concepts are directly distillable into words. Wiebe et al. (1996) put it this way:

With the intentional approach, generation is cast as the process of planning a sequence of utterances that achieve one's goals, and understanding is cast as the process of inferring the speaker's intentions from his or her utterance. (Wiebe et al., 1996:5)

This deterministic argument can only be taken so far. While it may be true that we use language in idiosyncratic ways to convey our innermost thoughts and what we perceive as our view of the world, it cannot be true that in the general case the meaning is unmistakably imbued in the word by the speaker. If this were so, that is, if the individual language producer were able to shape the meaning of the words they use, then everybody would be able to invent their own languages and expect others to recognise the specific meaning that was being expressed.

In the more encompassing social constructivist view (Vygotsky, 1999), meaning-making is a shared or negotiated social process which takes place in a whole environment that includes the person, their inner concepts and the influences of the people and objects around them. This social, agreed, characteristic of language and knowledge acquisition means that the repository of meaning is the systems and processes of linking concepts to signs that we use to communicate. Meaning must be cooperatively and actively constructed in that we communicate and so make meaning by representing our mental constructs in language. As Hall (1997a) puts it:

It is social actors who use the conceptual systems of their culture and the linguistic and other representational systems to construct meaning, to make the world meaningful and to communicate about that world meaningfully to others (Hall, 1997a: 25)

Representation, in this view, is a constructive activity of association and enables meaning to be made clear through the symbolic, or signed, functioning of language.

Language refers to, stands for or symbolises the objects, people, events and concepts that are important enough for us to want to communicate them.

Representation operates on both of the levels described above: it classifies and organises our concepts of the world inside our minds and is the process through which these concepts are coded into language use. A text will necessarily reflect the representational process, as the author's internal concepts or world-views are encoded into the language contained in the text. The text consumer also has a set of language codes which facilitates the deconstruction of the language text and the consequent making of meaning. This meaning-making process may reveal the author's conceptual framework to the reader through the bidirectional representational process or it may lead the reader to different conclusions. This will depend on factors which include the initial level of shared meaning, the socio-cultural contexts of the author and reader and the success of the communication process itself.

2.1.4 Semiotic and Discursive Approaches to Representation

Looked at from a linguistic semiotic perspective (Saussure, 1977) language is referential in nature and meaning exists rather than being created. Culture is also semiotic in that all cultural practice is assumed to be meaningful and, for this meaning to be expressed, culture must make use of signs. Of particular relevance here, when it comes to decoding representations of cultural others in a text, are the semiotic categories of denotation and connotation, (Barthes, 1977; Fiske, 1990). Connotation is understood to mean the culturally-determined set of concepts and meanings that we associate with a given linguistic signifier. Silverman (1983) has pointed out that our denotational interpretation of meaning is also hegemonically determined by our cultural environment, that is that the denotational is simply the last, and preferred, of a series of connotational meanings. In accessing discourse, readers necessarily access meaning at both the denotational and connotational level. The potential range of connotational meanings is not purely subjective and idiosyncratic but is delineated by the general codes shared by members of a single or similar culture. As Chandler (2002) exemplifies it:

Certain connotations would be widely recognized within a culture. Most adults in Western cultures would know that a car can connote virility or freedom.
(Chandler, 2002: online)

That is, the social and more affective aspects of meaning: the beliefs, attitudes and emotions expressed by the author can be accessed through the connotational element encoded into the discourse. This link to the social theme in discourse is what Barthes (1993) calls myth or ideology-making, the socially-referred message in the text.

Semiotic interpretations of representations and the meaning-making process are useful but limited for a number of reasons including the fact that both languages and world-views are continually changing, and at both levels of representation the codes that we use to invest meaning through language are constantly being adapted and realigned. This underlying movement in language and meaning makes it impossible to classify absolute or unique meaning relationships.

Looked at from a historico-political perspective (Foucault in Klages, 2004, Irvine, 2005), there are a number of essential elements involved in the way language interacts with cultural context. The most relevant of these is the idea of discourse, defined here as a system of representation in which groups of statements or texts function to describe the knowledge about a particular topic at a particular moment in time. In this sense, discourse is instrumental in defining the topic that it describes and it also, therefore, produces our understanding of that topic, that is our knowledge or meaning. Foucault's discourse bridges the gap between language and social action; it refers both to what we say and what we are doing while we are saying it. Readers of textual discourse as participants in a discourse community will be making meaning and making knowledge as they consume the texts.

The historical or moment in time component of this analysis is important since it restricts specific meaning to that moment and so accounts for the fluidity of mental constructs and language that we see across a period of time. Foucault's definition of discourse is exclusive in the sense that nothing has meaning outside of discourse and that discourse is, therefore, an absolute necessity for meaning-making. Taken one step further, without meaning-making we have neither identity nor group membership and hence no culture. As Paulsen et al, also quoting Graham & Paulsen (2002), put it:

Communication is a reflexive process of meaning making that helps to define and redefine our experiences as well as the way we relate to one another. The ways in which people make meaning also define and delineate the multiple social domains, or discourse communities, which they both inhabit and produce (Graham & Paulsen, 2002). As a result, communication reflects, shapes and reshapes our identities. The discourse we use and the discursive strategies we adopt are a clue to the ways in which we define our group memberships and ourselves. (Paulsen et al., 2005: online)

Thus, producers of discourse on a specific topic define the discourse community as a repository of current knowledge on the topical subject of the discourse. By partaking in the discourse as readers, and becoming part of the discourse community, readers align

themselves with the discourse community, or sub-groups of it, as a cultural grouping and create an identity for themselves as knowledgeable members of that community.

Power/Knowledge is a second relevant element in a discursive interpretation of representation as it directly concerns the social use to which knowledge and meaning is put. Meaning is made to work socially, that is representational discourse has social function, and is instrumental in determining the balance of power in the relationship between people with varying levels of knowledge. Klages (2004) gives a clear example of how this operates:

The best example of this is the frequently-heard phrase "Studies have shown that..." (...)If the University of Colorado announced that "studies have shown that kids learn better when they drink Mountain Dew," then a week later there might be Mountain Dew machines outside every classroom. And yes, of course one then asks who did the study, and were they funded by Mountain Dew? And Foucault would say that's a good example of how power/knowledge operates: Mountain Dew hires its own "experts" to produce the "knowledge" that Mountain Dew has some socially beneficial effect, and then social practices and agents believe that knowledge, are interpellated into that ideology, and thus act on it. (Klages, 2004: online)

The perceived power of the knowledge gained through the reading of online discourse will make more impression on the reader than the actual truthfulness of the knowledge. Readers who have no direct experience of a culture that is the subject of online text discourse will not be able to make any viable truth judgements about the knowledge contained in the texts. They will, however, be motivated in their reading since the value of the knowledge will lie in the internal power that it has, and which it consequently confers upon the reader. That is, instead of considering how the information maps onto the real world, the reader may preferentially consider it in terms of how it achieves the task at hand. If the information appears to satisfy a particular search paradigm, or give a complete description of a topic then meaning has been made in the mind of the reader. As Yovel (2003) puts it

Surely, language is representational in that it serves to communicate content to others; but communication in the first place is a medium for the will to act in the world - it frames the social world of action. Thus, language is rhetorical and performative first, and representational only instrumentally with little concern for "truth" and subject to its primary functions. (Yovel, 2003: online)

The fluidity and power of discourse, and the need for active participation in the

construction of meaning by both the authors and readers, is reflected in the fact that the topic being discussed can only exist in terms of the parameters of the discourse itself. Authors, readers and text itself are channels through which discourse moves as it facilitates the creation of meaning. In short, the subject is created by the discourse and not the other way round. As Crisafi (2000) puts it:

An author is not a creator but an initiator of discourse, who may spur on future discussion concerning a line of inquiry, but is never the absolute locus of knowledge concerning any field. Texts become mediums for which discourse flows through, rather than where meaning is imbedded or discovered. The author is a function of discourse, one point in a genealogy of thought traced through many different lines of thinking. (Crisafi, 2000, online)

Texts, authors and consumers of texts come together to create a discourse community through which cultural representations are circulated and shared meanings are generated. The use of the term ‘community’ is understood to reflect the shared objectives and interests of the members. Yates (1997) defines this in the following way:

A discourse community is a community in which people do not necessarily live together or ever see each other face-to-face, but where language (either spoken, written or digital) is used among themselves to pursue some common goals (Yates, 1997: 4)

2.1.4.1 Objective and Subjective Representational Levels

Although all texts that are part of the production of a discourse community are equally part of that community, they will not be perceived or valued in the same way by the members of the community. Potential text consumers will access the discourse community at particular points which are determined through the employment of subjective predictions as to likely text content. These predictions will be matched against actual texts produced by the community, with consequent membership of the community being dependent on the closeness of this match. Once a reader has become a member of the community and given that the total textual production of the community is larger than the consumption capacity of the reader, further text selection will take place.

All of the texts available in the community will support representational processes, but to the reader some of these will appear to be more objective and others more subjective in the discourses that they promote. There are two poles of representation involved here and they exist at opposite ends of a objective-subjective continuum. At one end of this range, that of objective representation, the discourse, through such constraints as the

author-type, statistical content layout and language style, endeavours to reflect the real-world 'as is' and, therefore, like a mirror, claims to display a high level of truth and objectivity since it exhibits no sign of interference between the object in the world and the recorded representation. It is depersonalised discourse of record rather than of interpretation and, additionally, might take, for example, a statistical, diagrammatic or photographic form. Discourse containing objective representations tends to be more susceptible to the passage of time. Statistics and other facts are often time-stamped and so date relatively quickly.

At the other end of the continuum is subjective representation in which there is intentional, or possibly unintentional, inclusion of the personal interpretation of the author. This level of representation also claims to display the truth of the object, but in this the claim is supported by the author's having witnessed the events or objects portrayed. This places the discourse at a level of truth beyond that of hearsay or uninformed opinion. In the case of the texts looked at in this study, there is potentially a wide range of representational levels, from the more overtly objective to the totally subjective.

The sense in which it makes sense to call some representations "objective" and others "subjective" is the sense in which some representations are about objective things and others are about subjective things. Subjective representations, then, are egocentric representations. They are self-centered. They represent objects, properties, and relations that depend on the representing subject. In contrast, objective representations are allocentric or other-centered. They represent objects, properties, and relations that do not depend on the representing subject. (Mandik, in press)

Both of these types of representation will have their effect on the reader, but in markedly different ways. Objective representation, in the form of facts and figures, may be more familiar and more feel trustworthy to members of the discourse community who are familiar with the text genres in which it is presented. Other members of the community may be looking for more experiential-based or idiosyncratic readings that would favour the selection of texts containing more subjective representations. In any given case, there will be a process of selection and rejection of parts of the discourse community's total available production as individual members of that community engage with their motivationally and self-context-driven choices.

2.1.4.2 Cognitive and Affective Aspects of Meaning

Any view of meaning-making as both social and cognitive in nature, must necessarily

be integrated with the full range of human experience including mental operation and concept-forming, self-image, construction of and adherence to cultural norms and determination and practice of outward behaviour. Consumers of text in the discourse community are not empty vessels into which meaning in discourse can be poured. The reader, while actively making meaning in discourse, will be employing a range of cognitive and affective tools that guide the process. Amongst these tools will be the following: will, choice, sensory input, sense of self, emotion and attitude together with sense of belonging or identity-matching, empathy with the author or the situation and the cultural representations held in the mind from previous or other discourses and texts, that is experience. Greenberg & Pascual-Leone (2001) give a concise overview of how personal meaning-making is part of the larger human picture:

In our view, consciousness is a major arbiter of meaning by way of selecting the source of information to which to attend and the interpretation to be favored. Consciousness involves components of will and choice. (...) But consciousness is influenced by a number of additional factors. Among the most important are immediate emotional experience, the salience of external stimuli, the views and attitudes of others toward self, and the past responses of the self in similar situations. (...) It is, however, the arena for a final synthesis of different sources of sensory, kinaesthetic, emotional, conative, and conceptual information about the self and the world. Driven by affect, people are active constructors of meaning. (...) Emotion gives people feedback about what is important and meaningful, what is good or bad for them. (...) Personal meaning results from the self-organization and self-explication of one's own emotional experience. (Greenberg & Pascual-Leone, 2001: 166)

Above all, however, is the process of matching the results of employing meaning-building tools with the discourse itself. It is in this way that the reader will come to qualitatively identify with the author of the text and the author's purpose and motivation in writing the text and consequently believe that the reading of the text has involved the communication of meaning. The closer to the author the reader feels, the more important and clearly defined the personal meaning contained in the text. The more subjectively acceptable the text, that is the more the discourse draws the reader in as a whole-person at the cognitive and affective levels, again the more realistic and personal the meaning becomes to that person.

2.1.4.3 Representation and Representations

The constructivist view of representation (see 2.1.2) does not imply that there is a single outcome to the meaning-making process. Stuart Hall (1997b) pointed out that the extent

to which events have a single and true meaning is questionable. There may never be just one interpretation of an event or a cultural practice or, indeed, a whole culture. There may, in fact, be as many interpretations as there are observers. Interpretations will also be time dependent in the sense that the same observer may come to interpret the event in a different way at a later time. The reality of the event or practice lies within its representation and the representational process. Meaning is made on an individual reader basis and a return to the same discourse at a later time, or a simultaneous reading of the same discourse by a member of another culture may lead to different meanings:

Many meanings, we might say, are potential within the photo. But there is no one, true meaning. Meaning 'floats'. It cannot be finally fixed. However, attempting to fix it is the work of representational practice, which intervenes in the many potential meanings of an image in an attempt to privilege one. (Hall, 1997b: 228)

Not all potential meanings in a text are equally likely to be accepted by the readership. Using techniques of discourse analysis, there may be intra-textual and intertextual clues in the discourse which allow the text to be analysed in terms of what Hall (1997b:228) calls a preferred meaning, that is the meaning that the author intended the reader to construct from the text. Although there is no guarantee, nor way of measuring, that readers will come to broadly similar understandings of the discourse, it is reasonable to assume that members of the same or similar culture are likely to take similar meanings from the same discourse when accessed at roughly similar times.

In practical terms this restriction on the generalisability of meaning-making does not appear to constrain the communication of meaning in the medium focussed on in this study, the Internet. There has been a huge explosion in the total number of informational web pages. However, these pages are less clearly identifiable, in terms of source, and less clearly verifiable than traditional printed sources (discussed further in 2.3.2 and 2.3.4). This anonymity is not merely of individual identity but, and especially in the case of pages written in English, also in terms of membership cultural groupings. These conflicting factors, the growth of use and the change in traditional author/reader relationships, indicate that meaning-making is taking place on the basis of a shifted paradigm. That is, the main guide to the appropriacy of the meaning conveyed in discourse is the actual meaning constructed through the representational process and the number and type of underlying cultural representations of world concepts that the author has put forward. The reader must judge the author's world view in terms of their own and where the reader believes there is a good enough match, communication of shared meaning will take place.

Due to anonymity, varying levels of language competence and identity-changing, it is possible that the reader will become involved in the communication of inappropriate meaning. This is a risk of communicating through such an anonymous, at-distance, source that can only be cleared up after the reader has had a chance to test the meaning hypotheses formed during reading through real world encounter. As mentioned above, and in the context of meaning addressed by this study, the reality or truth of the situation is, at least initially, of little significance.

2.1.5 *The Self, Otherness and Stereotyping*

Discourse which is centred topically on another culture addresses directly the relationship between members of the discourse community, on the one hand, and members of the target community on the other. There are, in such discourse, three main intercultural dimensions. The first is the author's membership of certain socio-cultural sub-groupings, whether explicitly stated or not. Secondly there are the assumed and actual cultural identities of the readership. These are known to the readers but assumed by the authors. Thirdly there is the object of the discourse, members of the culture which is being discoursed about.

Each of the participants or objects of this discourse community has their own vectors of relationship with the community and may, in fact, belong to widely different cultures. For both authors and readers the discourse is produced and consumed by the self as a member of one's own culture. Being a member of the same discourse community is not the same as being members of the same culture, though it is possible. This is not just because of the physical and virtual distances that separate the participants but also because the concept of the self and one's own culture as fact is largely locally produced. This is inherent in Lock's (1981) definition of the relationship between self and culture:

The concepts of self and culture are interdependent: one cannot exist without the other. Thus, while it has become commonplace to regard the self as a cultural product, and enquire as to the 'environmental' (cultural) factors that lead to the expression or inhibition of this or that aspect of the self, we must not forget the reverse perspective; that culture itself is a product of the self. Selves are constituted within culture, and culture is maintained by the community of selves.
(Lock, 1981: online)

The construction 'the self' is also intimately linked to the construction 'the other'. It is the process through which the concept of the self is constructed within the dual conceptual framework of the self/other. In its simplest form, otherness can be described as all that is not the self. The other is defined not by inherent characteristics but by those

characteristics that make it different from the self. As DuFour (2001) puts it:

The Other makes symbolic functioning possible by giving the subject a point of reference that can serve as a foundation for his discourse. Without the Other, the individual 'being oneself' is at a loss. Put simply, he has no one to turn to. 'Being together' is also endangered, because only common reference to the same Other enables different individuals to belong to one community. For the subject, it is the Other that makes time and space possible. (DuFour, 2001: online)

In the anthropological sense, the other is simply a recognition of what is perceived as normal human diversity. Diversity, as such, is affectively neither a positive or negative way of categorising the world. However, when diversity is combined with an ethnocentric way of thinking, as it quite often is in discourses on the other, then diversity changes into categorical or typological difference. This allows qualitative judgement to be made as to the value of the behaviours of the other. In discourse, this is encoded as author's attitude.

Bakhtin (in Hirschkop & Shepherd, 1989; Morris, 1994) put forward the notion that meaning can only be constructed in the context of a dialogue. In this view, the other is essential to the construction of meaning and there can be no meaning without the participation of the other in dialogically framed discourse. In the case of online discourse, such a dialogue of meaning may take place between the author and the readership which may include members of the target culture.

In both the anthropological and linguistic senses, the first functional role of the other is to create the identities of self and other through expression of difference. The second role, in the context of discourse centred on the other, is to make meaning. Engagement in the dialogic processes of the discourse community will reveal the underlying meaning-making centred on the other. The meaning-making in this study concerns the cultural representations of the Portuguese business community. The dialogue of meaning which takes place in the discourse is between the authors and the readership. There is, therefore, a triangular relationship of self and others in such discourse as there are self and other relations between the members of the discourse community and between the discourse community and members of the Portuguese business community. The dialogue between community members enables meanings to be made, through representational processes, which may later become part of intercultural dialogues between community members and members of the Portuguese business community.

These ideas provide a useful framework for considering the creation of meaning and the significance of difference that directly relates not only to the way that we see ourselves

but also to the way in which we create or perceive the difference between ourselves and those that are culturally different from ourselves.

One of the components of our social behaviour, and our behaviour in the process of socialisation (Greenberg & Pascual-Leone, 2001), is that of will or will-power. We generally behave like those that we perceive to be similar to ourselves, but we are also capable of behaving like those of groups that we perceive as being different if we feel that the occasion warrants it. The immigrant determined to integrate, the bilingual child in a bicultural family, the inhabitant of a multi-cultural city are all, either willingly or unconsciously, able to acculturate to the culture of the other. These processes, of culture-hopping or culture-merging or new culture-forming show, firstly, that culture and cultural membership, and therefore meaning, are not fixed but are subject to guided interpretation. Secondly, they show that, to a certain extent, culture is locally and individually determined and that people can make conscious choices as to what culture means and, therefore, how they interact with both selves and others.

The representations that we have of the world do not rely on uniquely identifying individual objects in a one-on-one process. If this were the case, we would not be able to recognise objects, behaviours or ideas that we had not seen before. Instead, we rely on a system of 'typing' (Dyer, 1977) through which the characteristics of people, objects, behaviours and ideas are mapped onto our internalised categorisation systems. This process of fitting experience to categories necessarily involves us resolving the object in question into component parts which match those of the category. For example, behaviour may be typified as 'impolite' through the resolving of the characteristics of loudness of voice, aggressive stance and physical proximity, use of swear words and failure to keep to turn-taking norms in conversation. Not only does the behaviour itself become categorised but the person exhibiting this behaviour will also be pigeon-holed into wider categories on the basis of this behaviour. A person may then be categorised as rude on the basis of a single exhibition of impolite behaviour.

These systems of categorisation and meaning-making tend to be simple and efficient. As Allport (1979) put it:

We like to solve problems easily. We can do so best if we can fit them rapidly into a satisfactory category and use this category as a means of prejudging the solution. So long as we can get away with coarse overgeneralizations we tend to do so. Why? Well, it takes less effort, and effort, except in the area of our most intense interests, is disagreeable. (Allport, 1979: 20-21).

One consequence of this is that the categorisation or representation processes should

change as little as possible. Although we do have to change as we encounter the new and the unknown, the fewer changes we have to make the more efficient the system appears to us, the less effort we expend and the more stable and hence less threatening our world seems. Our procedural priority is to reduce uncertainty and 'culture shock' to a minimum by being able to organise the world around us into meaningful categories as quickly as possible. This tendency to categorise and classify applies equally to members of a discourse community in their consumption of discourse and has been mimicked by the researcher in this study.

It is also possible for the process to work in reverse, that is, instead of adapting our categories to fit our experience, we tend to adapt our experience to match the expectations raised by our internal meaning-making processes. This reverse functioning of making sense of the world operates through the process of reducing our experience of objects, people and behaviour to their most memorable or prominent characteristics and then fitting these into our mental categories. Much of that which is individual or different in our experience is stripped away and ignored as we pick up on that which is perceived to be salient and therefore more meaningful. Meaningful in this sense means more easily categorised. It can be seen that such processes, taken to their extremes, involve reducing our experience of the world to as few meaningful categories as possible using generalisations. These generalisations are applied to groups of people, objects and behaviours with the assumption that everybody within the group shares these characteristics. This is the process of stereotyping. Madey (1999) sums it up as:

A stereotype is a generalization about a group of people in which identical characteristics are assigned to virtually all member of the group, regardless of actual variations among group members. Stereotyping involves an act of categorization where we look at a person and by virtue of an attribute, physical feature, or behavior we can assign that person to a group. Some basic features on which people stereotype others are age, race, and gender; however, there are probably an infinite number of categories in which we can stereotype someone. (Madey, 1999: Chapter 4: online)

The poverty of meaning inherent in such a process then guides our communication and interaction with the objects that we see as belonging to such a stereotyped category as well as making it difficult for individual category members to escape being stereotyped. In this process, risk and fear of the unknown, as in an intercultural encounter, is reduced to the minimum through categorisation and pre-familiarisation. Stereotypes are, therefore, a necessary part of our everyday lives. The role of stereotypes is reinforced by the fact that, in a world in which communication and information are privileged and

prioritised, we expect and are expected to know far more than we can actually experience. Knowledge, then, may be built through information-seeking dialogic processes within a discourse community without recourse to experience. In addition, as we travel more, or experience more otherness, we seek to make this process as efficient as possible by going forearmed with an understanding, which is as complete yet as simple as possible, as to what we will encounter and therefore how we might deal with it. In stereotyping the other, we also affirm our visions of the self and our own community, providing yet another level of support in intercultural communication. Moreira (2004) explains the use to which stereotyping is put in this context:

The process of cultural stereotyping involves the simplification and categorisation of perceived reality into meaningful and shared understandings between members of one social group about other social groups. .. Consequently, stereotypes contribute to the cohesion and identity of social groups, fulfilling an important communicative function within (and between) social groups. (Moreira, 2004: 338)

That is, stereotypes are a tool of mental construct-building through which we organise the perceived differences between ourselves and others. These perceived differences can then be used to guide our behaviour and actively mediate our communication in our intercultural interactions with members of other social groupings.

Intercultural communication in the business context is marked by key behaviours such as efficiency, relationship-building, co-operation and deal-making. In this context, the poverty or simplification of meaning mentioned above should not be taken to mean that stereotypes themselves are necessarily negative in connotation. They may be equally positive or negative and normally tend to be both. A stereotyped classification of a social group may contain binary opposite interpretations of the same behaviour. Additionally, the same group may be perceived as having a mix of positive and negative behaviour attributes and characteristics that arise through analysis of behaviour in different fields. Pragmatic business people will work with stereotypes that function with positive outcomes and reject or modify those that don't.

In our dealings with others we are conscious of the relative social standings of the participants in the discourse. These social standings do not only guide our discourse but are also created by it. Our understanding of ourselves and our stereotypical representation of the other can never be free of judgemental power structures. This is a result of the fact that all of the members of a particular cultural grouping may recognise and possibly use similar stereotypes of the other. If this were not the case we would not

be able to communicate this knowledge to each other. The individual self plays a small part in the process of determining stereotypes of the other, that is in selecting which characteristics are to be accepted and which rejected. There are many other entities involved in this selection process and these are organised into what Hall (1997:259) calls a “regime of representation”. This regime, then, does not simply reflect observable component characteristics of the other but fits them into a value judgement scheme which in turn is related to the perceived socio-political balance of power between the cultures of the self and the cultures of the other. As a result, typing and stereotyping in discourse are necessarily reflected in authors’ attitudes towards the cultural other.

Stereotyping thus locks us into useful predictability and, given that the other is also stereotyping us, enables outcomes to intercultural encounters to be constructed on the basis of largely irresistible forces in a process that may leave little room for individuality and unpredictability. This is not to imply that we do not treat each other as individuals in our encounters, simply that we treat each other as the individual members of what we perceive to be a social group with fixed characteristics. This rigidity of encounter parameters may appear to make our intercultural dealings easier and more efficient but in reality, and at the level of the partaking individual, the encounter is often anything but satisfying as both parties perceive the preconceptions of the other at work. According to Pickering (2004):

Stereotyping frames other people in a tight focus of fixity, of essentialized difference. .. Differences between members (of a social group) are either missed or dismissed. It's because of the substitution of highly selective, salient detail for anything like the whole picture that stereotypes limit recognition of human diversity and inhibit intercultural dialogue and exchange. (Pickering, 2004: 21-22)

Consequently, and although stereotypes are important to the way that we organise and understand cultural groupings, there is a danger inherent in assuming that the other will conform to the stereotype in an intercultural encounter. Oversimplification of characteristics of other cultural groups together with the assumption that all members of the group will behave in a similar fashion can lead to impoverished intercultural communication in the business context. As Harraka (2002) puts it:

Stereotypes are, on one hand, a cause of cultural mismatches. They are dangerous, because they affect people's behaviour. Visitors easily base their attitudes on stereotypic ideas of what they think is "the correct way" of functioning. They make mistakes and feel anxious – as well as cause frustration in others. (Harraka, 2002: 53)

In online discourse the processes of stereotyping act along specific lines. The closer the cultural representations built into the discourse are to stereotypes, the more easily they will be recognised by a wider range of readers. There may, therefore, be a tendency on the part of the author to rely significantly on stereotypes in an effort to reach as wide an audience as possible. The result of this in an intercultural encounter may be that stereotypical representations of the other, resulting from knowledge building that is non-experiential in nature from the perspective of the knowledge builder, may not match either reality as it is later encountered or the stereotypical representations of their own community that the other may have.

Learning about the stereotypes that other people might hold, and hence the related assumptions about intercultural communication behaviours and procedures, would enable participants in such communication situations to meliorate the effects of the oversimplification process.

2.1.6 Text and Texts

As reading members of the discourse community consume an increasing number of texts, the representations of the texts that they construct begin to interact with each other. From a text content, or comprehension and information-seeking, point of view, when there is task-orientation in the reading process, the reader builds representations at a number of levels (Zwaan & Singer, 2003). The first two of these, the surface and textbase levels, are concerned with the text as a language form. The third is the situational representation which is built up as a consequence of meaning-making while reading. This situational representation concerns the state of affairs addressed by the text. There is evidence (Zwaan et al., 1995; Garrod & Sanford, 1999) that situational representations are incrementally constructed according to denotations in the text that the reader is paying attention to.

Two events that overlap on multiple situational dimensions are more strongly connected in the comprehender's long-term memory representation than two events connected on only a single dimension. It has been shown that readers simultaneously monitor multiple situational dimensions during comprehension and that this is reflected in their long-term memory representations (Zwaan & Singer 2003: 93)

Perfetti et al. (1999: 119) have extended the concept of situational representations to include the representational processes involved in reading across many texts in their Documents Model which has two main components. The first is the Situational Representational Model which is built on all the situations, facts and events described in the texts. The second is the Intertextual Representations Model which is built on the information attached to texts about source, content and rhetorical goals as well as the relationships between texts including intertextual references and solidarity relationships. Together these representational models construct an incremental and coherent cultural representation of the subject of the text. The text consumer uses similarities across texts to construct, confirm and develop wider hypotheses of meaning.

The patterns that the reader will look for will tend to be focussed on those meanings in the text which highlight new information or those that confirm previously acquired views. In the context of this study, and in terms of representations of culturally-oriented behaviours, newness can be equated with difference and therefore with the other. This anthropological rather than purely linguistic view of the acquisition of meaning (Durkheim in Alexander, 1992; Lévi-Strauss in Pateman, 2003) is explained by the natural human instinct to classify, and the characterisation of culture as meaning-giving through classification of behaviours into specific positions within a system of behaviours. The most basic classification possible is a binary one into the positions of similar and different. This fits neatly with the parallel classification of self and other. Through a process of accumulation the reader will come to aggregate characteristics of the other, giving prominence to those that occur more frequently and discarding those that appear to be less common to the group of authors. This simplifying process is the construction of stereotypes by the reader.

2.2 Discourse Considerations

2.2.1 Discourse Analysis

In order to extract and classify the cultural meanings in texts it is necessary to adopt a method of discourse analysis that will reveal the cultural representations encoded by the authors. Discourse analysis itself is a very broad field of study with a wide range of

analytical tools and methods at its disposal. Johnstone (2001:9) has encapsulated the study of discourse in a relevant six point heuristic of positions that may be taken into consideration in selecting a discourse analysis methodology:

i. Discourse is shaped by the world, and discourse shapes the world.

As Johnstone makes clear, discourse does not exist independently of the socio-cultural environments in which both author and consumer of discourse exist. Not only is discourse shaped by our environment but the discourse itself feeds back into the environment in the sense that it shapes the way that we perceive not only our own environment, as consumers, but also the environment of others. This is a crucial factor in the present study, since, in the analysis of written discourse, this shaping of the environment of the cultural other is being done without necessary direct recourse or access to the other or to the author who is writing about the other. Consumers of the online discourse focussing on the other will use this discourse to shape their impressions, through agreement with, adoption, and eventually assimilation of the cultural representations it contains. By bringing together a number of such interpretations the consumer will build up a subjectively homogenous and stereotypical view of the other and from this develop attitudes that will guide behaviour in intercultural interactions.

ii. Discourse is shaped by language, and discourse shapes language.

In the most general sense, any meaning contained in asynchronously-consumed written, as opposed to face-to-face spoken, discourse must be bounded by the medium and form it takes. As is discussed below (see 2.2.3), studies (such as Lewenstein, 2000; DeVigal, 2000), have shown that most online reading focuses on text, that is language, primarily with other features of the page such as graphics, sounds and animations, having only secondary consideration, at least in terms of time and attention span. This is not to say that these other features do not shape the overall function and interpretation of the discourse but they have been left outside the scope of this study. Although the language itself is the gateway to the representations contained in the text, this study takes a mixed ethnographic and linguistic, rather than purely linguistic, approach to the analysis of discourse and the texts are interpreted by the researcher in a way parallel to that in which they might be consumed by the target consumer. In addition, the linguistic norms and traditions followed by the various authors are unknown, as are the authors themselves. As a result, this study does not analyse the text in great linguistic detail but rather accesses the text to mine it for the cultural information it contains.

iii. Discourse is shaped by participants, and discourse shapes participants.

As mentioned above, the authors of the texts in question are unknown to the reader-consumer and the researcher. The author's world can only be accessed indirectly through ethnographic analysis of the text. This is a significant tool, however, in that much can be deduced about authors, their socio-cultural environment, their relationships and intentions towards the topic of the discourse and their intended or actual relationship with their audience. The researcher, as participant-consumer, will obviously draw conclusions from the text which are shaped by his own socio-cultural environment notwithstanding any attempts at objectivity. This, however, is a factor which is present in all ethnographic research of this type and must be taken into consideration when considering the conclusions of the study.

iv. Discourse is shaped by prior discourse, and discourse shapes the possibilities for future discourse.

This feature of discourse refers largely to the intertextuality of discourse, the way in which text refers to other texts, in both the linguistic and cultural senses, with which the consumer-reader is familiar or will become familiar. This quality of intertextuality is important since it is a stepping stone on the way to interpretation as it helps the reader to position and anchor the text being read within a socio-cultural environment of familiar texts.

The online texts which are the focus of this study can be evaluated for their intertextuality in two main ways. Firstly, and although there is no evident chronological or other hierarchy of texts on the Internet, texts will refer to and have structural relationships with each other. This referencing will, in many cases, be made more obvious and easier to follow as text linking, through the use of hypertext links, is one of the fundamental features of Internet texts.

Secondly, and perhaps more crucially from the point of view of interpretation of cultural representations, the texts will show intertextuality with other texts that the author is aware of and related to. These will not necessarily be texts that the readership or the researcher are familiar with. Depending on the cultural gap, itself unknown, that exists between author and reader, the familiarity of the text with other texts in terms of both form and content will very much depend on the cultural environment of the individual reader. Any assumptions or conclusions made about the intertextuality of the target text will necessarily be subjective and context-skewed in relation to the intended or subconscious intertextuality created by the author. In many cases, where the cultural differences are minimal, this distortion will be minor and undetectable to the reader. As

this researcher's socio-cultural environment is reasonably similar to that of the target culture and language in question, any errors in judgement of intertextuality will of reduced significance.

v. Discourse is shaped by its medium, and discourse shapes the possibilities of its medium.

At first glance, the majority of the discourse encountered in online web pages is written. Some pages may contain embedded speech forms, audio or video text for example, and there is also the presence of visual discourse. However, as discussed, the focus of online reading is text and most of the pages thrown up in the searches carried out for this study were text-rich and other media poor. There is a great deal of discussion and little solid agreement as to whether online text in general is similar in structure and form to written or spoken language or whether it is a new hybrid form of medium. For example, Malone (1995) claims that many of the compositional aspects of online writing are speech-like, for example the tendency not to review, edit or correct discourse. Other researchers, such as Snyder (1996, in Macfadyen, 2004) have focussed on some of the unique qualities of online writing, such as the use of hypertext, and have made a case for a new, post-modern shape to textual reality. Much of this discussion, though, focuses on synchronous and interactive online communication rather than the more static web page.

For the purposes of this study it has been assumed that the texts examined are, linguistically, written texts, although, and as discussed below, they are not necessarily read or culturally consumed in a similar way to printed text. Medium can also be taken to mean the channel or mode of delivery of the discourse, in this case onto the reader's computer screen. This important aspect of discourse and its effects on the nature of communication are discussed in more detail below.

vi. Discourse is shaped by purpose, and discourse shapes possible purposes.

This is perhaps the most all-embracing and significant of the six aspects of discourse analysis discussed here when it comes to applying analysis to the texts examined in this study. The purpose here refers to the voices heard within the text. All these voices, those of the author or other players introduced consciously or sub-consciously by the author, have a reason to discourse. The discourse may contain a superficial and overtly stated function, to inform the reader about visiting Portugal for example, but there will also be many other functions encoded in the discourse. These functions may include warning, emphasising the difference of the cultural other or reaffirming the author's own cultural

superiority. These functions are exercised through the language used but they must be supported and given reason by the cultural representations, often masquerading as objective facts, that the author uses in the argument or persuasion in the text. These cultural representations, of both the implicit and explicit kind, are what the reader is intended, subconsciously or consciously, to react to in the text. The author may have a range of purposes in mind, but these will all hinge, at least initially, on an understanding, acceptance or rejection of the representational coding, through language, that has been employed in the text.

These considerations as to the nature and applicability of discourse analysis to the present study lead to the conclusion that a partial discourse analysis of static online texts is possible and that this analysis, to be realistically achievable and to maximise generalisability and usefulness of conclusions, should focus on the reasons or purposes contained within the discourse act together with the concomitant cultural representations. Moreover, the methodology to be employed needs to be one that can bring to bear the socio-cultural, experiential and interpersonal factors inherent in the consumption of discourse as well as withstand the essential subjectivity of interpretation at distance of the unknown. This is why an ethnographic approach, in which the researcher becomes the consumer, has been adopted. This approach has the added benefit that the researcher-consumer is also able to make this study of practical importance, as explained above, by putting any usable conclusions to work in the preparation for intercultural encounters.

The general features of discourse have been well documented (van Dijk, 1998; Gee, 2000; Titscher, 2000; Fairclough, 2003) as has the fact that discourse has a dynamic social component in that it is instrumental in doing things in the real world (Bahtia, 2004). Discourse, then, is functional or pragmatic; it has social purpose in that it goes beyond the message transmitted to achieve action or reaction from the audience. As Mey has aptly summarised it:

Messages are not just 'signals', relayed through impersonal channels; the human expression functions as an appeal to other users and as a means of social togetherness. (Mey 2001:10)

The concept of functions or communicative purpose, as used here, embraces many sub-functions or contributing aspects of discourse such as motives, intentions, outcomes, consequences, effects and affects. They are social in the sense that the functions impact upon people, primarily on their perceptions and then consequently or causally on their formation of attitudes and relations.

2.2.2 The Nature of Online Text

Mey implies that the channel of communication may well be impersonal, which is certainly the usual case of the Internet web page. It does not follow, however, that the use of language in communication means a loss of pragmatic intention or force simply because of the higher level of unknowns in such a mode of communication.

In the case of discourse launched in cyberspace, the process is anything but one-sided or author-determined. The intended communicative function, encoded by the author and particularly in the case of web pages, is not necessarily predictably, and certainly not uniquely decoded, by the readership. This is a result of the fact that the author has no control over the readership, nor, more crucially, any certain knowledge as to who that readership might be. There are, of course, a few predictable general criteria such as, in this case, the fact that the reader can read in English and is interested in reading about Portugal (or least doesn't shy away from reading about it when surfing the net). It is important to point out here that online web page discourse is usually less apparently efficient in the transmission of socially-oriented communicative purpose from author to reader than more traditional printed and distributed discourse (in terms of this study this would include travel literature, magazines, trade journals, country profiles amongst others). This is due to the existence of a range of criteria determined by the publishers of printed documents that leads to more careful control over the final printed output. Printed discourse must, often, be commercially viable, its precise form may result from audience market research, it may be expected to last some time, it may need to be authoritative.

The socio-cultural differences in creation and consumption of online and printed discourse are very real as Ryder points out:

The finality of printed text gives it an authority which cannot be countered, situating active debate in a closed forum between author, publisher and editor. All other readers enjoy only passive encounters with the text. (Ryder, 1997:1)

This potentially different functioning of traditional and computer-mediated discourse is also highlighted by Graddol in his study of the future of the English language in which he compares Internet-based discourse with traditional print:

But with increasing use of electronic communication much of the social and cultural effect of the stability of print has already been lost, along with central 'gatekeeping' agents such as editors and publishers who maintain consistent, standardised forms of language (Graddol, 2000:56)

Although Graddol was primarily concerned with the effect of the online publishing

environment on the language itself, he emphasises that, culturally, online text is not the same as printed text. As Lule says: "*writing changes when technology changes*" (Lule, 1998), to this can be added that if writing changes then consumption of the writing must also change. Research (CSU, 2004a; CSU, 2004b; Spyridakis, 2000; Lule, 1998) has highlighted some of the differences between online and printed text from the point of view of text as a cultural consumable. A number of significant differences are discussed below:

- Online text is potentially more *complete* as hypertext links will enable the reader to access annotations, links and paths to further reading in specific areas of interest almost instantaneously. This will enable the reader to more efficiently hone in on the target information. A well-linked text with ample backup and further reading resource will increase the reader's confidence in the information to be found in such a text. A significant amount of guiding can also counterbalance other, more negative aspects of online texts from the reader's point of view, such as the control-free quality described below.
- Online text is *multiplicitous* as the sheer number of sources available to the reader is vastly greater than might be available in the printed form. Knowing that such a multiplicity exists, especially when proved by a search engine results page, enables the reader to select and reject texts quickly in a search for target information. A corollary of this facet of online texts is that in terms of culturally determined consumption of the texts there may be a tendency for the online reader-researcher to reject those texts which do not immediately conform to a particular reading agenda. The result of this may be a tendency to select and read those texts which already conform to the socio-cultural criteria anchored in the reader's particular social environment and which brought the reader to the reading task in the first place. Thus, much online reading, especially in its rapid skimming form, of search results, may lead to construction and reinforcement of stereotypical representations of the information, in this case a culture, that is being targeted.
- Online texts are potentially *control-free*. As mentioned above, the texts that are found online may or may not be similar to printed texts in their publishing and production processes. Certainly there are many texts to be found online which have not been selected for publication according to another person's criteria, edited by someone with experience in making text readable, proof-read by someone who eliminates grammatical, lexical and orthographical errors or typeset by someone who knows which fonts are most readable and how information can be highlighted and page layout made maximally attractive. In addition, much online writing may

not go through the rigorous draft and re-draft process that printed text is usually subject to.

The result of this is that online text has a very different feel to it. To the reader, it may appear, for example, incomplete, rushed, amateurish or obtuse. All of this will feed into the reader's reaction to the text and hence affect its perceived validity and usefulness. Many texts may be skipped over if they look unattractive or difficult and texts which contain many errors may lose credibility.

There is another significant way in which online texts may be free of external control and constraints and that is that, not only may there be no in-house editorial policy bounding the author's work, but there will often be no advertising on the page, or if there is there will be little attempt by the advertiser to influence the page's content since such advertising is normally block-booked across a wide range of sites. This leaves the reader with the impression that what is being read has come straight from the author and therefore provides the closest possible link to the message and function as the author sees it.

- Online texts are *time-warped*. There is often no or little indication as to the time of production, either in terms of when or duration. There may be clues in the text but the consumer often does not know directly whether the text is up to date and relevant, though there may be stylistic and design clues that help form an impression of the text's recency and hence, in the case of useful culturally-oriented business-travel information, worth. It is also more challenging for the reader to choose between texts since there may not be an obvious hierarchy of recency amongst the selected search results. Printed text is datable and thus anchorable within the reader's timeframe. This may have an effect on the general perceived worth and reliability of online texts. It is no longer the case that everything that can be found on the Internet is new and, as time passes, the Internet throws up and ever-increasing proportion of older, and outdated, sites and texts.
- Printed text is, within an edition, immutable whereas online text is *commutable*. The webmaster or author can change the text at will and two visits to the same text site will often reveal that changes have been made. Authors can update their propositions or react to external stimuli such as criticism or praise. Online texts can even disappear altogether if the site owner doesn't maintain their site or pay their site fees or if the IP provider decides to pull the plug on a particular site. This possibility is usually mitigated by the proliferation of texts on multiple sites but this is not a guarantee of re-visitability. This again may impact on the perceived worth of the information contained in a text. It may be that the commutability of

online texts makes them appear shifty or transient or that the ability to correct and updates reinforces their contemporariness and relevance. The choice between these two reactions will be based on the attitudes of the individual though it may be assumed that readers who have chosen to research online do so because they implicitly trust this type of reading experience.

- Online text may be *subscribable* and therefore out of the reach of the reader-researcher. Although printed forms of text normally have to be purchased, a selection may be made after browsing through a bookstore or library. The exact nature of online text may not become evident until after it has been purchased. In some cases, text may only be accessible through subscription to an organisation or journal of some kind and the reader has to subscribe to the whole series in order to access a limited amount of information. As text producers become increasingly aware of the value of information, the amount of free information, and the perceived worth of that which is free, is diminishing. Text which is given away online may not be perceived to be as valuable as text that has to be paid for.
- Online text is *technology-dependent*. The printed text will have the same appearance to the reader as it does to the author. Its attractiveness, and the value assigned to this, is programmable. This is not the case of online text because the format, fonts, characters, layout, photos, size, embedded video or audio are all dependent on the installed technology that the reader has for accessing the text. For example, a reader without a PDF file reader installed on the computer will not be able to read any such documents and large file-sizes caused by rich photograph formats may cause a reader with a slow modem connection to the Internet to skip the page even before it has finished loading. Text authors need to be aware of these limitations if they are to make their texts available to a wide reading public. This necessity for technical knowledge will, to a certain extent, restrict the accessible authorship to those with technical training or those with money to pay for a site to be produced. This obviously restricts the texts available to the online reader and gives them a particular socio-cultural slant. The supposed free-for-all and accessible-to-all nature of the Internet exists only within a restricted range of possibilities. Anyone with the right basic web construction skills, time and money can construct and place a text on the web but this text may not be available to as wide a readership as the author supposes.
- Online text may be *offline text*. This does not simply mean that text can be sites can be saved for later reading offline, although this will obviously affect the reader's interaction with the text but only in a way which makes it more similar to

printed text. In fact, the more text-like the online text appears to be the greater the chances that the reader will not read it online but will either print it out as is, or will, even more drastically, copy and paste the pure text component of the text into a word processor and then print this out to read.

This dramatically changes the nature of the reading experience since it is now displaced in both time and context. The reader no longer reads the text as part of a continuous flow of online research and the text, unless it was only text to begin with, is no longer enriched by its internal and external online contexts. The external contexts are its juxtaposition with other recently read texts, its hyperlinks to other texts, and the socio-cultural environment in which the reader reads the text. A text accessed from the office during a busy working day will not be read in the same way as the same text printed out and then read leisurely at home once the working day has finished. The internal context, the photos, layout, banners, sounds and other features that were an integral part of the online presentation of the text will normally not have made it to the printed page version of the text.

- The genre of online text is, in cultural terms, *delivery-object divorced*. As Chartier (2004) points out, the printed word has, throughout and despite its historical meanderings, become relatively fixed in terms of the relationship between genre and delivery object. News articles, for example, are found in newspapers, price lists in catalogues and narrative discourse in novels. These objects are different from each other not just in their form but in the usages to which they are put as cultural objects.

These differences are sufficiently discriminated that the vehicle itself has become, in many cases, an integral part of the genre and the cultural experience. For example, the news, as read in yesterday's newspaper, is not the same as the news read in today's newspaper, even if accessed at the same time. In terms of cultural consumption, a newspaper may be used not only to read and to be informed but also to guarantee privacy on a train journey or a way of striking up a conversation in a café. Online genres are all presented through the same, technological interface. There are superficial formatting differences between online magazines, newspapers, diaries and e-books but these do not simulate the object itself and cannot be put to the same distinctive uses since the cultural consumption of the text is really the consumption of the computer technology and the environment in which this takes place. There may be trends and fashions in this consumption but they are not genre-specific, although they may be technology-specific. In this way, online text, in its full cultural setting, is consumed in a considerably different

manner from the multitude of uses to which the physical manifestations of printed text are put. Some of these uses may overlap and some may be adaptations of offline text consumption but they will be much less genre-related. In addition, as the technology has a homogenising effect on online discourse, to the less proficient or experienced reader, the genre, and hence the relevance or indicators for consumption, may not be as obvious as with printed text. There is a similar effect which is sometimes used in the printed media when an advertisement is published, in a newspaper, as if it were and using the same generic format as an article. The publisher will often make it clear that it is in an advertisement to avoid any cross-generic confusion.

2.2.3 Literacy and Online Reading

The points considered in the previous section look at reading online from the point of view of cultural consumption of the text through the characteristics of the discourse medium itself. It is also important to consider how readers read, and whether the modes of text are read in the same way with regards to the reading skills and strategies employed. Whether reading online or offline, the reader will employ the reading skills and strategies which seem best suited to the tasks which have been defined by the purpose for reading. The main ways of reading, that is skimming, scanning and reading intensively are applied to different text types and for different reading purposes. The evidence from research and the resulting theories as to how different online and offline reading are, is by no means decisive.

On a physical level, Lewenstein (2000) and DeVigal (2000) reporting on an eye-tracking project at Stanford University carried out in conjunction with the Poynter Institute of Journalism and in which they monitored reading of online news articles came to the conclusion that the two types of reading were significantly different. Their conclusions in regard to online reading were that the online reader engages with text on the page before any other type of content (graphics, animations, banners, etc.). They and other studies (Moses, 2001:online) also point out that this contrasts quite strongly with the reading of printed news, a process in which graphics and headlines represent key points of entry and subsequent immersion in the text.

The eyetracking study, though, has been criticised for its methodology and so its conclusions may be limited in their wider applicability.

2.2.3.1 Hypermedia, electronic literacy and negotiation of meaning

As mentioned briefly above, hypertext is a special form of online text composition and hence of reading. Hypertext in its widest sense does not refer simply to words that lead

to other text, though this may be the most common use. Richards (2000: 60) has pointed out that the concept of hypertext, in the context of online reading studies, is often enlarged to that of hypermedia which includes all the digitised sounds and images on the web page and which may lead the reader to other hypermedia or texts.

The principle relevance of this to online reading is that the nature of literacy itself, in this case electronic literacy, is considerably changed by the inclusion of hypermedia in the Internet text. Hypermedia links all texts together and changes the reading experience from a static to a fluid one. Kaplan (1995) pointed out that hypermedia structures '*offer readers multiple trajectories through the textual domain*'. The author of the text takes on a much more passive role and becomes merely one of many potential sources. Consequently, the author may not control the reading process in any meaningful way since the reader is free to follow the author's text, follow the author's links and move away from interacting with the original text or arrive at the author's text as a brief stop on a continuing journey. The reader, on the other hand, is free to pick and choose a path through text and texts, leading to a new form of open-ended reading and the promotion of associative thought, interpretation and opinion-forming. As Kaplan (1995 and 2004 online) put it, '*each choice of direction a reader makes in her encounter with the emerging text, in effect, produces that text*'. That is, in online reading the text and therefore the reading and meaning creation experience is as much created by the reader as it is by the writer. Many researchers have pointed out that, in online reading, the technology has deterministically led to a blurring of not only the roles of reader and writer but of the nature of reading and writing itself. As Bolter said:

The computer gives the reader the opportunity to touch the text itself, an opportunity never available in print, where the text lies on a plane inaccessible to the reader. Readers of a printed book can write over or deface the text, but they cannot write in it. In the electronic medium readers cannot avoid writing the text itself, since every choice they make is an act of writing. (Bolter, 1991:144)

This merging of the reader-writer and reading-writing processes provides a strong line of support for the ethno-methodological discourse approach taken in this study since it allows the researcher-reader not simply to interpret meaning in text passively but to become an active part of the meaning creation process., a process which that involves indirect negotiation between author, reader and the text itself. There is a clearly a sense here in which the text, and specifically its hypermedia aspect, constitutes a communication-enabling space in which the members of the discourse community can negotiate meaning, though without any direct communication between the parties

involved.

Interest levels are crucial motivators in the process of online reading and each text may be entertained just so long as nothing more interesting beckons. A reader who is looking for information that is both consistent and quickly acquired will tend to follow those links and read those texts that seem to be leading to a comprehensible, unique and informative answer to the reading task. In terms of representations of other cultures, this again would tend to favour reinforcement of preconceptions and stereotypes. This does not, of course, apply to other readers who are looking for the new and the challenging and so may follow links which lead to information which is new, startling or contradictory to their assumptions or expectations.

Like the debate over online reading in general, there is considerable disagreement as to whether the hypertext / hypermedia structure found on web pages does, in fact, contribute to a new form of literacy and consequent meaning-making. Tuman (1992 and 2004 online), in a discussion of the nature of literacy in general, refutes the special role of hypertext and online literacy that Kaplan ascribes to and claims that literacy, as a human function, exists most valuably when it provides the opportunity for oppositional thinking and experience relating. That is, the differences that may exist between writer and reader are the very foundation of alternative and critical thinking and this is what constitutes the stuff of literacy. If these differences were supposed not to exist due to a merging of writer and reader functions then what results is not literacy in this sense at all, but something more akin to the restless zapping and surfing of television channels that leads to a great deal of input, and possibly information retention, but not the ability to dwell in any meaningful sense in the world of the author.

Furthermore, Douglas (2000) argues that hypertext may actually offer readers less choice, flexibility and autonomy in reading and meaning-creation than printed texts. In his historico-cultural consideration of the nature of the written word, in both print and online, Douglas points out that the printed form of writing has always had a role as a tool for the maintaining of cultural hegemony and the repression of divergent thought and world views. This has led to the printed word taking the form it has and explains the way in which it is consumed as a cultural object. There is nothing new in hypertext or online publishing to suggest that this isn't going to follow the same path of guided or controlled discovery which is even more effectively hegemonic since it maintains a veneer of free choice, self-determination and intercultural cooperation.

Both Tuman and Douglas use, as the foundation of their arguments, a direct comparison between the historical, literary and socio-cultural features of online and offline reading,

text creation and text consumption. However, it is likely that, due to the nascent state of online reading, the precise nature, course and uses of online discourse, particular that of hypertext, has yet to become clearly fixed or determined. The printed word had a similar beginning in that the precise form of the evolution of its social consumption was, initially, neither predictable nor apparently in-built. What is true is that the printing press did bring about large scale cultural transformations and there is no reason to suppose that the infant Internet, be it an informational or a communicative discourse tool, does not also contain the seeds of multiform evolutionary paths.

Richards (2000) brings together the hypertext theorists and their critics by suggesting a model of consumption of online discourse, of which hypermedia is a significant part, that focuses on the Internet, not merely as a source of information, but as a communicative environment. The Internet is an inherently contradictory cultural and communicative space. In it users must, for example, come to terms with associative and non-linear hypertexts that are based on traditional hierarchical and linear printed texts. They will find an environment which is ludic and relaxing in that it is entertainment-based but which is concurrently suspicious and to be resisted because of its technological obscurity and identity opaqueness. Additionally, they must confront the fact that meaning and meaning-making may either be strategically intended and encoded or accidental and contingent. The space may be embracing and, debatably, lead to a feeling of community but it can also be alienating, in both the virtual and real worlds. All of these contradictions must be resolved by the user. Hypermedia models of text consumption, as outlined above, are too limited because, although, at the present time, they may describe the nature of the online discourse experience, they fail to take into account and interpret the process that the consumer must go through in resolving such conflicts. In the case of text consumption, these imply selecting and taking approaches and strategies geared towards meaning-making. In many forms of Internet use, such as synchronous chat, the strategies and meaning will be directly negotiated between author and reader. Even with asynchronous and once-only unidirectional usage, as with email or web pages, the consumer must adopt communication-related strategies in order to arrive at meaning. In sum, the Internet is used as a socio-cultural tool for communicating, rather than mere information-harvesting. The event of accessing and consuming online text cannot be reduced to its informational components, its bits and bytes and code, as this would be to deny the motivation behind and nature of the human interface in the Internet experience. Electronic literacy is, as Richards concludes:

..ever a dialogical process whatever the mode and medium of communication between authors and audiences. (Richards, 2000:73)

Reading online text, then, cannot be assumed to operate in its entirety in the same way as reading printed text. Online text is constitutionally different from offline text in its authored production processes and format. It lacks many of the external genre markers of printed material and it is open to non-linear reading strategies. Online discourse, as a cultural object, is not produced or consumed in the same way as offline discourse. As such, any social functions which online discourse is employed to achieve must either be different or must be realised through different or modified means. However, meaning-making online, taken from the perspective outlined above, shares many characteristics with offline meaning-making, especially when the discourse is textual, as is the case with web pages. The process of reading online is still a two-way communicative act between author and reader, though the reader may or may not be making text and may or may not be using some of the authored meanings and intentions.

The examination of online text, then, must be undertaken with these restrictions and possibilities in mind. As an object of research it must be treated not only as a separate area of study but also with a methodology carefully selected to suit its particular characteristics.

2.3 The Internet and Information-Seeking Processes

2.3.1 *The Internet as Cultural Artefact*

The Internet, which, depending on sociological viewpoint, can be thought of as a cultural object, artefact or tool, is qualitatively different from other cultural artefacts used for communication or, more narrowly, information retrieval. The Internet, in both popular lore and academic study, has come to be regarded as a strong cultural force that has enabled a type of cultural expression that may not have been previously possible. In a study in which participants were encouraged, implicitly, to record their affective sentiments towards various aspects of online culture, King (2001) summarises the affective nature of online culture in this way:

..the online world is a potent cultural environment subjectively built on fundamental sentiments much more extreme than those typically invoked in other environments. One might expect that as these intense settings, identities and behaviours are manipulated during online interactions, outrageous emotional displays and profound mood changes would be commonplace. Indeed, casual observation and popular culture suggest that the online environment fits this expectation, with extreme emotional displays and disinhibited behaviour being the norm rather than the exception. However, these accounts tend to exaggerate the disinhibited elements of online culture and overlook the cultural stability of

the online environment. Although the online social environment is powerfully charged with affect, that affective charge appears to be invoked very judiciously in online interaction (King, 2001: 429)

It is apparent, from King's remarks, that there is a range of online environments with differing cultural contexts. This is not a comment on affective coding of the online discourse per se, but rather on the socio-cultural environments in which Internet users find themselves when acting as participants in online activities. In other words, this is the manner in which people express themselves when participating in online discourse. This is highly relevant to the present study since this apparent lack of inhibition in online participation means that the resulting discourse will contain evidence of this disinhibition and so will be more easily open to decoding of its affective elements by the researcher. Some of the more immediately interactive, more speech-like and synchronous forms of Internet communication, such as chat rooms and text messenger services, allow for a much wider range of emotional expression. However, the apparently static web pages are also affectively charged and considerably more disinhibited than, for example, the generically equivalent print form.

2.3.2 The Internet as Information Source

There are many different ways in which people might build up a picture or representation of another culture. These include:

- Previous visits and contacts
- Information from others who have previously visited or been in contact
- Television / radio documentary and news
- Official trade and other embassy-related information
- Newspaper / printed news and information
- Television / film fictitious representations
- Tourist brochures
- Literature
- The Internet

The object of this study, the Internet, has been chosen for two main, and related, reasons. The first reason is concerned with its nature as a source of information and means of communication. Unlike many of the other sources mentioned above, it is widely available and it is primarily used for information exchange. Haythornthwaite and

Wellman (2002) review a number of studies which emphasise that the two main uses of the Internet are for sending email and searching for information. It exists, in both its origins and current usage, to promote the exchange of information and communication between members of communities who would otherwise have little practicable opportunity to interact.

The Digital Future Report (2004:49-50), in an exhaustive and ongoing study of Internet usage in North America, describes how the Internet is perceived as a very, or extremely, important source of information by most users (55.2%), and by experienced users it is considered to be more important as an information source than any other form of media. Although the percentage of respondents in the Digital Future Report study who state that the Internet is a very or extremely important source of information has declined somewhat over the four years of the report, this is also true for all other sources of information apart from television. The report goes on to conclude that Internet usage is an interactive process involving thinking, communicating and life goal attainment:

Yet often lost in this discussion is recognition that going online for information and entertainment is not merely a passive activity (such as watching television or movies), but rather is an active, participatory process. There are no “digital couch potatoes” using the Internet; while users are online, they link, think, and interact with information and with other users. Simply, they are not merely watching – they are involved. (The Digital Future Report, 2004: 97)

The importance of this conclusion lies in the dual identity that the Internet has as both a repository of information and a communication tool with an increasing emphasis on the latter. As Richards (2000) points out:

However, as more sophisticated uses of Internet communication were developed in the 1990s for purposes of education, e-commerce, and everyday communication, there was an increased general recognition that informational uses of new electronic media or telecommunications ever involve processes of interaction, communication, and even human community. This is evidenced by how the previously dominant generic term for interactive electronic media, Information Technology (or simply IT), is now increasingly being replaced by Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs) and even Communication and Information Technologies (CITs). (Richards, 2000: 59)

This role of the Internet in communication between people and peoples and even in the building of communities is central to the present study given that one of the underlying assumptions is that by reading on the Internet the consumer of online text is not merely

harvesting objective information but is engaging in a communicative act with the author of that information and hence is able, even at a distance, to negotiate meaning. This negotiation of meaning, encapsulated in the Internet's ability to make participants feel that they are taking part in a global community enterprise, must be one of the principle factors which explains the relatively high level of trust invested in information originating from the Internet.

The second, and more specific and pragmatic, reason for choosing the Internet is because it is the medium of choice for the business person looking for reliable online information on most aspects of business including sales opportunities, competitors, marketing and advertising, investment and, most relevant here, travel (Forbes.com, 2003 and updated in Forbes.com 2004). These Forbes.com studies demonstrate that staff and middle and senior level managers in medium and large size enterprises in North and South America, the Pacific Rim and Europe show an increasing tendency to use the Internet for business information related research. The research shows that 85% of correspondents use Internet search engines (Forbes.com 2004: 25) and that 45% of company executives search for information on places or cities online (Forbes.com 2004: 26). This figure includes the type of research that might be carried out before a visit to another country or foreign city. When asked what the most important media was for business information related searches the correspondents replied that 52% considered the Internet to be the single most important source of business related information (compared with 22% for newspapers, 14% for industry trade publications, 6% for magazines, 5% for television and 3% for radio). The reports conclude that:

The Internet continues to be the most influential and important source of information on business for C-Level executives and Senior Management in enterprise level companies. Searching the net for research and news is a daily at-work routine for C-level executives and their Sr. Management counterparts. (Forbes.com 2004:5)

2.3.3 Information-Seeking Processes and Meaning Making

This study focuses on the kind of information that a person might seek out for a first contact with the cultural other. Business people, expanding their business to new markets around the world, may well form their opinions as to the nature of doing business in Portugal and with the Portuguese via the Internet. Although the Internet, as has already been pointed out, is neither quantitatively nor qualitatively equal to all other types of information source, there are a number of considerations regarding the information-seeking process that apply to all sources. From research into library habits in which a number of information sources are juxtaposed, Buckland (1992) has

provided a three dimensional characterisation of information and information-seeking that can be summarised as follows:

i. Information is a process

That is, it involves a change of status from unknower into knower, the person becomes informed. This is a social process, applicable to all information-seeking activity, in which such elements as purpose, selection strategy, research method, formation of research questions, research environment and compilation of results are all determined by the socio-cultural environment of the information seeker.

Perhaps the most important aspect of this socialisation of information seeking is the individually-determined value judgements that have to be made about the relevance of information and the resolution of content conflict. Kuhlthau (1994) points out that, according to personal construct theory, the information process is complete in that it involves both the information-seeking and information-using stages in an overall process of construction of our personal worlds. This construction involves the whole person: thinking, feeling, reacting and acting in a dynamic two-way process of learning.

Moreover, the construction of meaning and social use of the information is not a smooth process that increases linearly with, in this case, the number of sites visited and the amount of discourse consumed. Rather, the researcher, confronted with new information, is initially confused and possibly anxious. This confusion and anxiety may actually increase as the information-seeking process proceeds until a threshold is reached where either the search is abandoned or a hypothesis as to the meaning of the information is constructed. The process may then continue with either the building of a new, different hypothesis or a testing of the existing one. In the case of the present study, these hypotheses relate to all types of acquired information: the facts, the representations of the cultural other and the affective charge inherent in the discourse. These forms of information do not form separate hypotheses but will merge and combine into overarching hypotheses that will address a range of information.

ii. Information is knowledge

Information exists as facts or content. In the case of this study, the facts, the practical indicators that will aid a business trip to Portugal, will exist in a variety of formats and at a variety of levels. A lot of the information, for example as regards climate, currency and language, will be factual and directly absorbed by the researcher with little processing. Some content, for example, that is reportage, opinion or perception may be slightly less obvious in a text and may only concretise through the reading of a number of texts. Some information, such as author's purpose, attitude, implicit cultural

representations and stereotyping may be more hidden and require either more directed research to extract or a greater number of texts to be consumed. Summarising information gathering in their ethnographic research into library use amongst children, Alexandersson & Limberg (2003) point out that:

Research proves that meaning is constructed gradually in the school context; this involves it changing continuously as the work proceeds. When using computers (as a research tool) in learning processes the students adjust the meaning from the interaction that grows in the interaction with the computer.
(Alexandersson & Limberg, 2003: 18)

iii. Information as Object

Information also has identity according to the form, media or mode in which it is encountered. In this case, information may have identity according to its specific textual context, the mode of delivery, which is the Internet and the computer, and the media which may be written, graphic or audio, though the focus in this study is exclusively on written text. As discussed in 2.2.2 and 2.2.3 and below, the information delivery vehicle stamps its own characteristics onto the information it contains. There is a particular difficulty in characterising this effect when dealing with the Internet since the technology itself affects the presentation of information, for example in terms of the ease with which online discourse can be classified as to genre, in ways that are as yet new and not fully described when compared to more traditional forms of information delivery including the printed word and oral narrative.

Meaning-making and information-seeking are not two separate processes but are two aspects of the same process as Limberg (1999) points out. Alexandersson and Limberg (2003) assert that the method of information seeking and the use to which the information is put interact with the different ways in which the content of the information is understood. Put in another way, the same information accessed in a different way, by printed book rather than on the Internet, would not necessarily lead to the same understanding of content. Information processing involves more than harvesting or gathering and, given that the motivation is task-based, as is assumed in this study, meaning-making cannot be isolated from the processes of information use. A socio-cultural perspective on the information seeking and consequent meaning-making process, then, perceives the information-seeker to be participating in a process of socialisation in which the computer/Internet acts as cultural artefact tool with a communicative function.

2.3.4 The Internet and Trustworthiness

It is not sufficient that the Internet contains accessible information of the right general type or that consumers may feel that they are more in contact with the producers of the information due to its nature. For the Internet to have survived and grown in the way that it has, the information must also be of provable and consistent quality in use. A high number of respondents in both of the reports quoted in 2.3.2 stated that they basically got what they needed from the Internet. 58% of those that research information online find what they want (Forbes.com 2004: 32) and 50.1% believe that all or most of the information online is reliable or accurate (The Digital Future Report, 2004: 51). In other words, the information extracted was useful to the purposes to which it was put.

There is an interesting and relevant qualification to the data in the Digital Future Report. As the Internet continues to grow in size, the quantity of information appears to be growing faster than its quality, in that a further 41.5% of respondents believe that about half of the information on the Internet is reliable and accurate (The Digital Future Report, 2004:52). These results may indicate that the relationship between Internet information and its reliability and therefore perceived value may change in a near future. For the moment, however, the internet is considered to be far more reliable than all other media-based sources of information generally available to the information-seeking business person.

This question of trust in the information available on the Internet is important since many of the criteria on which trust is established in a face-to-face, printed or other media communication may often be absent from the Internet source. The main trust-generating features that online discourse may lack include author identification, and hence author reliability; time-stamping of information; historical authenticity and the homogenising effect of the technology through which the text is transmitted. In any online exchange, whether it be through a website or some other form of CMC (Computer-Mediated Communication), the two parties, the reader or trustor and author or trustee, must build and adhere to an implicit set of rules governing the trustworthiness, and hence reliability, of the communicative act. It is arguable that in the consumption of web-page online discourse that the two parties are perceived by the consumer to be qualitatively different since the reader is, most definitely, a person operating in a definable and known socio-cultural environment, when represented by the ethnographic researcher. The author, however, is most commonly represented only by the page itself and may be a person, or persons, unknown. However, as Bailey et al. (2000) put it:

Together, these results suggest that humans develop trust in technological entities such as web sites, in the same manner that they develop trust in other people. (Bailey et al. 2002: 2)

One important trust-related corollary of the Digital Future Report and Forbes.com surveys which impacts directly on the methodology of the present study is that certain types of websites, namely government, NGO, institutional and established media are considered to be far more reliable than web pages produced by individuals (The Digital Future Report, 2004: 54).

It is probable that the Internet has come to be the research vehicle of choice for business people for the following reasons:

- Many of the other areas in which information can be found, such as fictional representations, tourist brochures and the general news, may help to form subconscious representations of a particular culture. However, business people searching actively for up to date information that they can use may avoid such sources because they are perceived to be unrealistic, stereotyped or transient.
- For many business users, working from their offices, the Internet is probably the most convenient and immediate source of information. With an Internet-connected computer on the desk, there is no need to go anywhere or ask anyone for help.
- Many of the potential sources of information, such as general news items or printed tourist brochures, may be rejected by the business person as not being sufficiently specific or within context.
- Business people are, generally speaking, competent and confident Internet and electronic communication users. Much of their financial, marketing, political and policy information will come from the intranet or Internet. They perceive information gleaned from the Internet to be both up to date and global, and thus more reliable. This is in large part because it is multi-sourced, open to criticism and constantly being emended.
- Previous contact with the culture or reported information from people who have had direct contact is obviously a valuable source of information about the culture. Such information may also, however, be perceived to be subjective or motivationally driven depending on the actual source.

Internet-based or computer mediated communication cannot be characterised as a single mode, locus or genre. It would not be easy to bring all these loci of communication together in a single study, not least because of the qualitative differences between them.

The focus here is on Web pages for practical reasons: the empirical evidence was gathered from members of communities who use the Internet as a resource for communicating information on their experiences of cultural practices of other communities. There is a vast amount of such information available which implies that cataloguing and indexing, as performed by Web search engines and the designers of Web pages, will be highly valued, by the parties directly involved, as a means of increasing the efficiency of the communication. This need for efficiency is enhanced by the choice of business-related information as the main focus of study.

2.3.5 Representations on the Internet

An ever-increasing amount of information is deposited on standard Internet web pages and their associated bulletin boards, discussion lists and blogs. Much of this information is derived from personal experience of some kind and is often supplied with the intention of influencing the reader to a particular point of view or course of action. The range of information is much greater than can be found in printed sources and it is of a very different nature. It can be much more personal and topically and stylistically wide-ranging. There is usually no editing process between the author and the reader. It is, selectively but in large part, non-academic, non-governmental, non-affiliated. As there is virtually no censorship of this type of information, and often no right or channel of reply unless the author chooses to include one, it is logical to assume that people will be writing more accurately or honestly what they feel. It is, in essence, a large pool of raw ethnographic data that can be mined by the researcher for trends and patterns in a specific area of interest.

As is discussed above (see 2.1.3), meaning-making through information gathering is an incremental process and so the sum of these variously sourced representations will create a single representation in the mind of the reader browsing different sources provided that there is some general agreement between them. This multi-sourced general representation is the object of the present study.

The cultural referents encountered within online discourse may take the form of implicit or explicit single images or reference to commonly shared stereotypes. Access to a sufficient number of such sites will lead to the construction and reinforcement of cultural representations, either through objectivation (in the Hegelian sense of externalising subjective impressions into socially sharable objects) or anchoring (in the sense that new information causes us to be more closely tied to previously-held views). There is no strong assertion here that the representations encountered by such direct search methods in any way reflect the reality of life in Portugal, much less that direct mapping of the representation onto the represented object or practice would be possible.

However, given the shrinkage of distance and the level of accessibility afforded by the Internet it is arguable that today's business person searching for useful and usable information on culturally determined business practices may have better access to the reality, or a workable reality, of the situation than was previously possible for researchers restricted to printed, oral or mass media sources. The range of online authors is far wider than would be available in an average library or bookshop. Many of these authors, such as the Portuguese themselves in this case, would not previously have been able to make their views and experiences available to such a diverse audience. In addition, building, altering and posting to a web site are now relatively easily acquired skills and the cost of maintaining a site has fallen dramatically over recent years. Information garnered in the field can be instantaneously uploaded, though this, of course, is no guarantee that any information found is up to date. This means, simply put, that the quantity, variety and type of sources available, as they reflect their authors' particular interpretations of reality, may help to maximise the possibility that the reader-researcher builds representations that will lead to the construction of a stereotype that is of some real use in the practical field of business relations. In any case, initial negative feedback on the representations so constructed would probably cause the person concerned to research differently, in different sites for example, a second and subsequent times.

3 Methodology

3.1 Study Outline

This study was designed to investigate two parallel sets of cultural representations of the Portuguese business community. The first set of cultural representations were those found as part of the output, in the form of written text, of an online discourse community focussed on the Portuguese business community. The members of this community are authors on the one hand and the readership on the other. Authors are any producers of online text on the general topic of working and doing business in Portugal and with the Portuguese. The readership is assumed to consist, in general, of anyone interested in such a topic and, more specifically, business people who might be seeking information on the behaviours, customs and practices of the Portuguese business community. It is further assumed that they might be undertaking such an information search with a view to preparing for a business trip to Portugal or doing business with Portuguese people for the first time. Applying an ethnographic approach, the researcher became part of the discourse community in order to access the community's text production. This involved simulating the information-seeking behaviour of the text consumer members of the community. Web pages which were accessed were analysed, using discourse analysis methods, for the cultural representations of the Portuguese business community encoded in the discourse.

The second set of representations, also referring to the Portuguese business community, were those held by a sub-group of members of this same community. This sub-group was composed of students following a languages and business skills course at the University of Aveiro in Portugal. Their cultural representations of their own community, together with those that they believe other people hold, were accessed through a survey based on a questionnaire. This questionnaire was designed to produce result types which could be codified in a similar manner to the analysis of the online texts.

The cultural representations that resulted from each half of the study were then compared with a view to producing pedagogical material, in the form of syllabus content, that would focus on any gap between the two sets and so benefit the intercultural competences of the students. The steps followed in the study are summarised schematically in Figure 1.

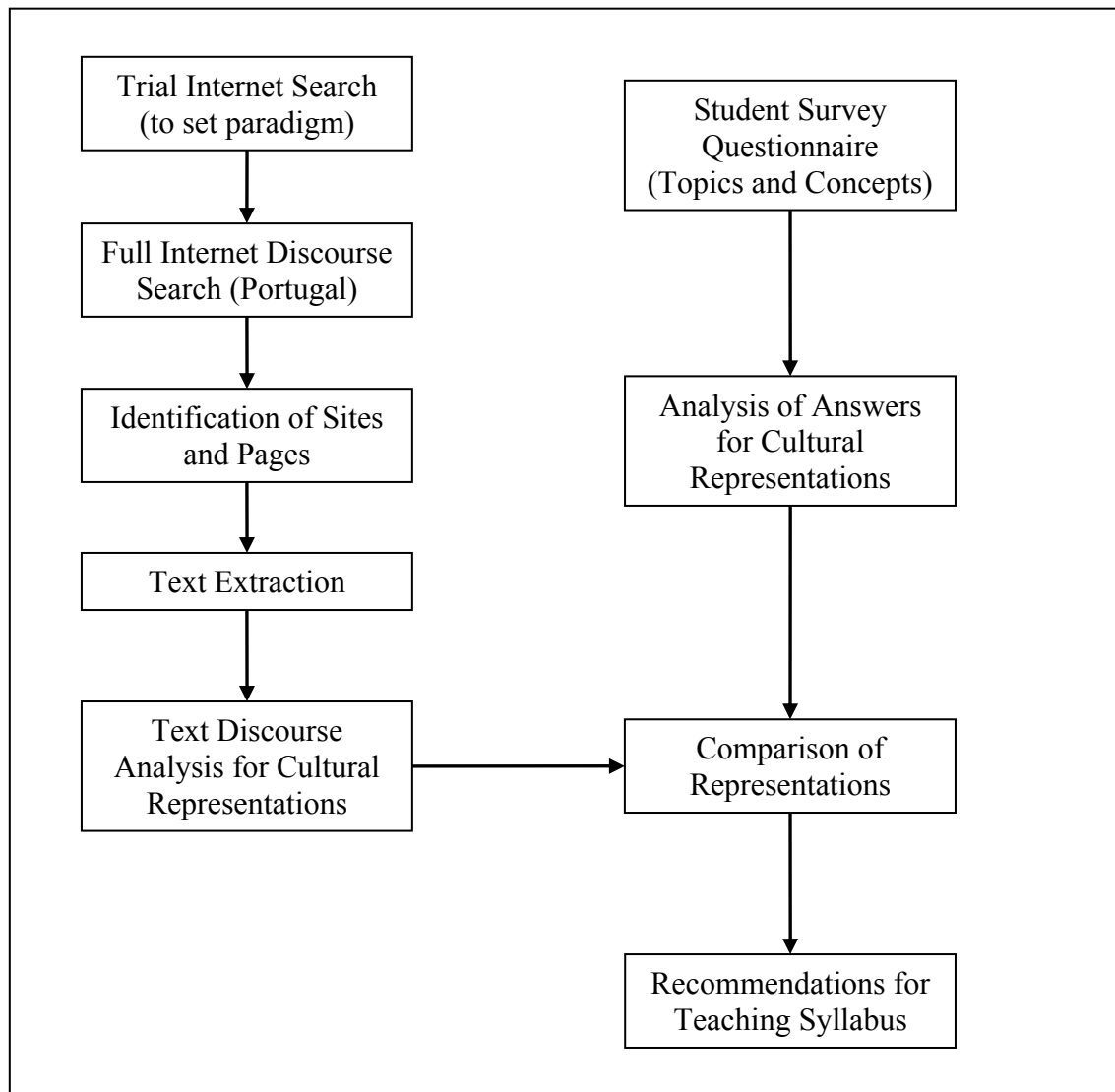


Figure 1 – Methodological Overview of Study

3.2 Methodological Framework

3.2.1 *Ethnographic Approach*

The methodologies employed in the empirical part of this study draw on a number of different approaches and specific paradigms. The study itself is divided into distinct parts, each with its own methodological framework. The general methodological approach is characterised by the application of ethnographic methods to the study of the production of the online discourse community, questionnaire-based inquiry for the collection of data from the student members of the target community and the application of grounded theory to the analysis of the results of both halves of the study and the final comparison phase.

Ethnography, traditionally and anthropologically, involves fieldwork with close

observation and note-taking of a set of behaviours over a period of time. The practice of this type of research may be defined as follows, in that ethnography:

Uses participant observation as a tool for gathering information and is a form of what is termed qualitative research in contrast to quantitative research which focuses on measurement and formal analysis. As participant observer, the researcher becomes actively immersed in the chosen setting in order to gain understanding through experiencing aspects of the life of an individual or group.
(Thomas Nelson Online Dictionary of the Social Sciences)

The notes taken are later dissected and analysed for patterns of cultural behaviour and social functioning. It would theoretically be possible to carry out a traditional ethnographic field study with Internet users from a variety of social contexts, though this would involve either a very long study period, and high costs, or collection of data from a distance. Such field studies are impracticable for reasons of time and cost and for additional reasons related to the intrusiveness of such a study and its potential to significantly alter the practices of the discourse community.

The research would be stripped of some of its authenticity if online consumers' identities, cultural contexts and purposes had to be revealed. The nature of the Internet use examined here is that it is anonymous and unexplained by the participants. Maintaining this level of anonymity and assumed, rather than proven, pattern of use enables the results of one researcher to be as typical and generalisable as the results of a known group and perhaps even more so given that an individual is able to design, focus and articulate his or her own processes of use of the cultural artefact more precisely than that of others.

The researcher took on, then, the role of participant as a reading member of the discourse community, rather than that of participant-observer, as defined above. Rather than monitoring the socio-cultural behaviour of others, it was the researcher's own behaviour which was monitored. However, the researcher had to participate by imitating the perceived behaviour given that the behaviour itself is not directly observable. The researcher is not, currently, a business person seeking new information on an essentially unknown cultural other, but has had this experience in the past. Some methodological aspects of the research have taken into account this need to imitate the behaviour of culturally-oriented information seeking.

The approach taken involved the prior setting up of a trial search for the same kind of information but related to a culture which the researcher is not familiar with. This not only enabled the researcher to become acquainted on a personal level with the types of

search behaviour that members of the discourse community might practise but also provided a useful guide for the main study itself by furnishing specific practical information relating to the search paradigm. This also enabled the researcher to overcome the potentially distorting influences arising from the fact that he lives and works in Portugal and so is obviously not in the same cultural or social context as a reader who is searching for information on a topic that is unknown.

The concepts contained in the texts resulting from the imitated information-seeking activity can then be treated by quantitative analysis to produce common patterns of conceptual representation of the behaviours of the Portuguese business community. These representations can then be compared with those that members of the target community, students in this case, have of themselves and think that others have of them. These impressions of the self are accessed through a questionnaire based survey. It would be tempting to base this survey on the same concepts that were uncovered during the analysis of online texts. However, this would constrain the formation of the questionnaire and cause it to run the risk of simply becoming a mirror of the first process. In order to ensure that this did not happen, the survey questionnaire was developed before the analysis of online texts was carried out. The results of both of these processes are, consequently, not directly mappable since they are not based upon exactly the same concept criteria. However, the intention is to carry out a qualitative comparison of the most salient concepts resulting from both inquiries.

3.2.2 Grounded Theory

The analysis of data results, and the need to make this analysis as open and flexible as possible so that comparison of the two halves of the study would be more effective resulted in the application of grounded theory-based processes (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990) to the study results. Borgatti characterises this type of methodological approach by explaining that:

"grounded theory" refers to theory that is developed inductively from a corpus of data. If done well, this means that the resulting theory at least fits one dataset perfectly. Grounded theory takes a case rather than variable perspective, although the distinction is nearly impossible to draw. This means in part that the researcher takes different cases to be wholes, in which the variables interact as a unit to produce certain outcomes. (Borgatti: online)

The analytical methodology which underlies this approach is one of coding the data set. Grounded theory involves three possible types of data coding: open, axial and selective which are normally applied in this sequence. Open coding is appropriate to this study

since it involves sequential grouping and classification of results. Babchuk (1996) describes this process in the following way :

Open coding is the initial process in grounded theory which involves breaking down, analysis, comparison, and categorization of data. In open coding, incidents or events are labeled and grouped together via constant comparison to form categories and properties. (Babchuk, 1996: online)

In other words, the data sets in this study, which result from ethnographic immersion in online discourse and questionnaires to a focus group, are perused, compared and re-compared with the aim of reducing the raw data to a smaller set of manageable concepts that are reflected in the data. As Borgatti puts it:

The basic idea of the grounded theory approach is to read (and re-read) a textual database (such as a corpus of field notes) and "discover" or label variables (called categories, concepts and properties) and their interrelationships. The ability to perceive variables and relationships is termed "theoretical sensitivity" and is affected by a number of things including one's reading of the literature and one's use of techniques designed to enhance sensitivity. (Borgatti: online)

The other coding processes are concerned with cross-referencing the concepts and building a theory that encapsulates those concepts and, as such, are steps beyond the scope of this study. The data in this case is text and the concepts are those related to the representations of the other that are constructed through the texts.

3.3 The Search Paradigm

Following the ethnographic procedure outlined above, the researcher elected to first carry out a trial search on a number of other national cultures: the Belgians, the Swedes, the Austrians and the Greeks in order to define search terms, processes and useful result types that might mirror those used by business people researching Portugal and which would help to ensure that the influence of the researcher's present socio-cultural environment would not distort the search process. These countries were selected randomly from European countries with which the researcher is not familiar. A variety of search terms were introduced into the search engine (www.google.co.uk) and the number of page hits returned were recorded for each of the countries and nationalities selected. The results of the searches are summarised in Table 1.

Search Terms	Portugal	Belgium	Sweden	Austria	Greece
country nationality business culture advice travel first	43,800	39,700	175,000	41,000	112,000
country nationality people behaviour business guidelines	20,300	26,400	162,000	25,500	37,100
country nationality "doing business" visitors etiquette	85	106	509	67	124
country nationality "business people" attitudes behaviour foreigners	105	71	482	111	142
country nationality "foreign visitors" companies "tend to"	227	143	3,790	222	371
country nationality "business customs" visitors should	32	22	196	35	44

Table 1 - Initial Control Search

These results show quite clearly that ‘Austria and Austrian’ would, in terms of information quantity, provide a similar range of search results to ‘Portugal and Portuguese’. The two sets of results show a correlation of 0.9896. Further search strings were then added to the comparison between Portugal and Austria with the following results:

Search String	Hits Returned	
	Portugal	Austria
country nationality business culture advice travel first	43,800	41,000
country nationality people behaviour business guidelines	20,300	25,500
country nationality "doing business" visitors etiquette	85	67
country nationality "business people" attitudes behaviour foreigners	105	111
country nationality "foreign visitors" companies "tend to"	227	222
country nationality "business customs" visitors should	32	35
country "the nationality are" business meetings culture	120	93
business in country foreign visitors expect	24	24
country "the nationality are" business meetings culture	24	24
"the nationality like to" "doing business" visitors	1	1
"guide to doing business in country"	20	27

"advice on doing business in country"	1	2
"business tips" country nationality	42	42
should "when visiting country" business	3	3
"do's and don'ts" country nationality business	220	170
"at work" country nationality business	73,300	57,300
"I found the nationality" business	19	7
I "visit country" "on business"	36	12
"we went to" meetings business "the people" country	8,760	9,120
"business deal" "nationality"	236	107
"working habits" problem country	352	440
business foreigners welcome meetings food "like to" country nationality	3,680	4,130
"women in business" country nationality	525	494
"positive impression" business country meetings nationality	52	58
"negative impression" business country meetings nationality	37	40
business country meetings nationality food welcome trip "my experience"	403	415
"visit to country" business	672	627

Table 2 - Full Search Results Comparison for Portugal and Austria

These results show a correlation of 0.9889, indicating that the two sets of data are similar in terms of quantity of results. In the results section of this study the qualitative similarity of the results will also be discussed. These results show that, at the quantitative level, the method and details of the search patterns used would give equivalent results for two different countries, one, Portugal, that the researcher is already familiar with and a second, Austria, with which the researcher has no previous links. This validates the ethnographic methodological approach in which the researcher imitates the behaviour of a reader with no previous knowledge of the target culture. A second stage of this validation process involved the selection of appropriate search strings, that is those from Table 2 which return relevant results according to the relevancy criteria discussed in the following section.

3.3.1 Information Retrieval

Hektor (2003) has characterised eight types of information activities that cover all aspects of information behaviour in everyday life. These are: search and retrieve; browsing; monitoring; unfolding; information exchange; dressing; instruct activity and

publish. Of these, search and retrieve, monitoring, browsing, instruct and publish are possibly most widely used in Internet information-seeking activities. The present study has focussed on three of these activities: publish, search and retrieve and browsing which are defined by Hektor in the following ways:

Publish : activities where an individual gives information by posting it for others to take part in are here referred to as information publish activities. Publishing information differs from instruct activities by being less administrative, more personal and often more extensive. Putting an advertisement in the paper or in the local shop, posting a Web site and making a comment to a newsgroup are all publications of information.

Search and retrieve describes activities strictly relating to an information-seeking behaviour. It is very much an active and directed behaviour

Browsing: The definition of browsing I suggest is the act of moving in a limited environment, with some level of perceived probability of encountering a resource of some value (Hektor, 2003: 128)

The first of these, publish, is author-oriented and describes the way in which the information focussed on, in this study, becomes available to the information-seeker. It is different from the essentially transactional nature of instruct information-seeking, which is typified by online form-filling or e-mail, in that it originates with an individual author and is directed at an unknown but numerous readership. This is true even of message exchange in forums and news groups in which messages sent and read by two individual information seekers may also be read and socially used by other visitors to the same web page.

Search and retrieve is commonly a tool-based operation in which the specific information result is first characterised in a language, usually visual or written in the case of the Internet, and then matched with a search through potential information sources. The tools used include search engines, directories, groups, forum organisation, recommendations and bookmarks. The first of these, search engines, has been used as the main search and retrieval tool in this study.

Browsing is the following of links from site to site as the reader constructs an individual text from all the available information. Browsing may be directed or incidental. It may be directed if the results of the search or retrieval process do not immediately produce the right type of information and other, apparently relevant, links appear on the initial pages. Alternatively, the first page encountered may be a portal or gateway to other information sources rather than an information source itself. It may be incidental if other

avenues of interest are suggested by the links that are encountered and the reader has the time and inclination to follow them up.

Hektor (2003: 132) suggests that there are three factors that can complicate information-seeking on the Internet. These are the abundance of information, the consequent difficulty of finding the right information hidden in a large amount of redundancy, and the problem of knowing whether or not they have found the right kind of information. Information-seekers deal with these constraints by reviewing as many sources as possible and by reviewing sources which are 'as to the point' as possible. This leads to the assumption made in this study that information-seekers will delve deeper into multi-layer web pages only after skimming through the page or pages resulting from the initial search. In addition, any pages that appear to be too complex or which present accessibility problems will be ignored.

It is necessary here to make a distinction between web sites and web pages. Many of the sites looked at in this study, were commercial and transactional in nature, such as those set up by travel organisations. However, many of these multi-page sites contain specific areas, often described as background or useful information, which contain culturally-oriented information that is only indirectly transactional in that it makes a contribution to the perceived overall effectiveness of the site. Alternatively, they may contain links to sites which are 'information publish' in nature. These page types, even though they were part of transactionally-oriented sites, were included in the study. Excluded from the study then, were web pages which are purely instructional, or transactional, in nature as well as search activities that involve monitoring, through repeated visits, to known sites.

3.3.2 Search methods

The search engine used in this study was Google, in its www.google.co.uk variant. This engine was chosen not just because of its apparently universal popularity (Toms et al. (2001) but because of the way in which it works. In the words of the Google team itself:

"The heart of our software is PageRank™.... (which) relies on the uniquely democratic nature of the web by using its vast link structure as an indicator of an individual page's value. In essence, Google interprets a link from page A to page B as a vote, by page A, for page B. But, Google looks at more than the sheer volume of votes, or links a page receives; it also analyses the page that casts the vote. Votes cast by pages that are themselves "important" weigh more heavily and help to make other pages "important."

Important, high-quality sites receive a higher PageRank, which Google remembers each time it conducts a search. Google combines PageRank with sophisticated text-matching techniques to find pages that are both important and relevant to your search." (Google Technology, retrieved from: <http://www.google.com/technology>)

These techniques make Google a very efficient search engine with a type of embedded cultural hierarchy since the likelihood of a page being returned as a search result is a function of the links to and from that page, which in itself is a socially determined measure of the page's perceived usefulness or worth.

3.3.2.1 Search Relevancy Criteria

Using these characterisations of information-seeking behaviour and the search process, the search engine tool and the parallel Austria search results, a set of relevancy criteria was developed for the closer examination of web pages that resulted from initial search procedures. Subsequently, relevant web pages were analysed for their textual content whereas irrelevant pages were excluded from the study. These criteria are summarised in Table 3:

Criteria for Relevancy	Criteria for Irrelevancy
On topic	Off topic or topic too wide
Link list or portal	Dead link or slow to load
Previously visited	Transactional in nature or requiring input of personal information by the reader
Repeated information	Not in English
	Paid for
	Too long, complex or difficult to read
	Pages which disappeared after two weeks

Table 3 - Search Relevancy Criteria

The topic interest of search results was initially decided by reference to the brief descriptions of results as they appear on the Google results page. These results contain a site title and an extract showing the context of the search string on the page. In some cases this was sufficient to eliminate the resulting page from the study. For example, the fourth result for the search string 'portugal portuguese "business customs" visitors should' was:

[A Primer on Exporting to Brazil](#)

... Imported products should bear a Portuguese translation of this information.
... American business visitors should become accustomed to several business ...
[edis.ifas.ufl.edu/FE505](#) - 57k - [Cached](#) - [Similar pages](#)

Here the resulting web page clearly refers to Brazil and not Portugal and so was not followed up.

In other cases, the topic irrelevancy of the search results could only be determined after skimming through the resulting page itself. The seventh result for the search string 'portugal portuguese "business people" attitudes behaviour foreigners' was:

[Cultural Detective Authors](#)

... core values and the perception of these values by various **foreigners**, ...
that teach **business people** effective cross-cultural communication skills. ...
[www.culturaldetective.com/cultures.html](#) - 191k - [Cached](#) - [Similar pages](#)

This lead to the following page which was classified as irrelevant because not only is there no specific reference to Portugal but also because the page is promoting commercial products that must be paid for.



Figure 2 - Irrelevant Search Result

The third result for the search string 'portugal portuguese "business people" attitudes behaviour foreigners' is shown below. This linked to a 34-page pdf file of an academic

paper. Although the topic is relevant to the seeking of culturally-oriented information on Portugal it was excluded from further examination because of its length and textual density.

[PDF] [A pessimistic vein pervasively dominates studies on migration to ...](#)

File Format: PDF/Adobe Acrobat

... foreigners with legal residence in Portugal (see chart 1) – except for ...
Furthermore, if any Portuguese or legal immigrant recruits illegal foreigners ...
www.fcsh.unl.pt/socinova/migration/workingpapers/PAPER%20FINAL.pdf - [Similar pages](#)

A number of search results led to sites which were purely transactional in nature, most often tourist boards, travel companies, B2B services or bookstores. These were also excluded from further analysis. A small number of sites were excluded because their textual contents were largely in languages other than English despite the fact that the search engine was pointed at English language pages.

3.3.2.2 *Search Result Selection & Classification*

Those sites which were selected for further examination, then, were initially classified as to the apparent suitability of their topic contents as initially understood. In some cases the initial search results led to portal or link list pages making it necessary to follow two or three links before reaching a topic-relevant page. Different search strings led, on many occasions, to the same sites. These, and any linked pages of interest, were investigated in depth the first time they were encountered. On subsequent searches, these pages and their contents were numerically added to the overall search analysis results. This was done because it was felt that the overall results should reflect the aggregate of all possible and relevant searches rather than just the variety of possible results. Some pages, which are returned across a wide variety of search strings, will have a proportionally larger effect on the readership as a whole. Additionally, some texts were encountered on more than web page. For example, the text:

Business socialising generally focuses on eating and drinking in bars and restaurants, with this seldom extending to people's homes.

appeared on both of these apparently unlinked pages:

<http://www.expedia.co.uk/daily/wg/P45236.asp>

<http://www.cityguide.travel-guides.com/cities/lis/Business.asp>

In all the cases but one this textual similarity to other pages was not acknowledged by

the page's author.

Although each individual reader will presumably only visit each page once, the more times a particular page is returned the more readers will visit it and the probability that any single reader will visit it will be higher. As a result its effect on the construction of representational images of the Portuguese in the whole readership population will be larger and moiré cumulative.

In order to imitate as closely as possible the putative business person researcher, attention was paid to a limited number of search results. Silverstein et al. (1998) have shown that 77% of search sessions are limited to a single query (although the search engine used in this case was Altavista and not Google) and that 85% of users looked at results that only appear on the first page of search results, which, in the case of both Altavista and Google, contains ten search results. Moreover, DiMaggio et al. (2001) point out that most users end their searches as soon as they find an acceptable site. Thus, throughout this study, analysis of search results has generally been limited to the first page of search results. The only exception to this has been in the case that the first seven or eight results fail the relevancy criteria (see Table 3) but the last two or three results on the results page meet these criteria. When this occurred with the Austria search, the researcher felt that this warranted proceeding to a second page of results. These were skimmed to see if they provided a continuation of the useful results appearing at the end of the preceding page.

3.3.2.3 Search Result Analysis

Once a page was found to be relevant and accessible, its text was read and appraised and a copy made of any part of the text which seemed to refer, either explicitly or implicitly, to the cultural behaviour patterns of the Portuguese business community. These extracts were then saved for later analysis. If a page made full and extensive reference to cultural behaviours then, in most cases, none of the available links were followed up. However, if the reference to cultural behaviours was fragmentary or superficial and a link hinted at a more complete treatment then the link was followed. Links which appeared to be highly relevant and interesting were followed in all cases as it was felt that this would more closely imitate the behaviour of the casual or semi-focussed reader.

Most of the pages consulted showed evidence of more than one distinguishable cultural representation of the business community. Where these referred to significantly different concepts they were extracted and subsequently counted as separate data. Where the same concept was referenced more than once in a text, the contextual text

was not extracted and counted separately unless it appeared in a significantly different position on the page or it was in some way presented in counterpoint to the first reference. This was found to be relatively common where the attitudinal feature of the discourse was different in the two examples.

As mentioned above, the search strings themselves were validated through a parallel search relating to the Austrian business community. As there is no finite number of possible search strings to guide the researcher, this parallel research was used to select and validate the search strings actually used in the study of the Portuguese business community. Only those search strings which returned relevant results in the Austrian search were applied to data collection in the Portuguese search. The relevancy rating of the search strings is outlined in Table 4

Search String	Hits Meeting Relevancy Criteria	Total Hits Examined	Relevancy %
"at work" country nationality business	17	20	85%
"useful information" people business country nationality	13	18	72%
country nationality "doing business" visitors etiquette	10	14	71%
"do's and don'ts" country nationality business	7	12	58%
country nationality "business customs" visitors should	5	10	50%
"the country and people of country"	4	8	50%
business country meetings nationality food welcome trip "my experience"	5	11	45%
"business travel guide" country nationality	8	18	44%
country nationality "foreign visitors" companies "tend to"	6	14	43%
"the people of country are"	4	10	40%
"business tips" country nationality	4	11	36%
should "when visiting country" business	1	3	33%
business in country foreign visitors expect	3	10	30%
country "the nationality are" business meetings culture	3	10	30%
"women in business" country nationality	3	10	30%

country nationality "business people" attitudes behaviour foreigners	2	10	20%
"business deal" "nationality"	2	10	20%
"executive briefing" country nationality	2	10	20%
I "visit country" "on business"	2	11	18%
"I found the nationality" business	1	7	14%
"visit to country" business	1	10	10%
country nationality business culture advice travel first	0	12	0%
"guide to doing business in country"	0	13	0%
country nationality people behaviour business guidelines	0	10	0%
"working habits" problem country nationality	0	10	0%
business foreigners welcome meetings food "like to" country nationality	0	10	0%
"positive impression" business country meetings nationality	0	10	0%
"negative impression" business country meetings nationality	0	10	0%
"we went to" meetings business "the people" country	0	10	0%
"business traveller's guide country nationality	0	10	0%
"advice on doing business in country"	0	2	0%
"guide to business culture" country nationality	0	2	0%
"the nationality like to" "doing business" visitors	0	1	0%

Table 4 – Search String Relevancy Results

The full Austrian search results may be found in Appendix 1.

3.4 Text Analysis

3.4.1 Classification and Selection of Texts

One of the important concerns of this study was to determine the types of text in which accessible representations of the Portuguese business other are embedded. This will support the pedagogical aims of this study through providing a framework for detailed

analysis and then organisation of any resulting recommendations. A clear and usable classification of discourse types will also help to enable a direct comparison of the cultural representations in online discourse with the representations as expressed by the student participants. Moreover, by delineating the online text types that contain extractable and definable cultural representations, attitudes and stereotypes this study will not only provide students with a tool that they can use in future self-oriented research but will also enable a link to be made between the online author's experience, motivations and presumed rhetorical functions and the quantity and perceived value of the opinions and attitudes expressed in the context of analysed discourse type. Consumers of online discourse may well invest a level of trust in the information extracted from online discourse but trustworthiness will not be spread evenly between the various discourse types. It may be the case, for example, that experiential based discourse is perceived as more trustworthy than pure opinion based discourse. As a result it is important to find a way of sorting and classifying texts so that method can be brought to bear on the analysis of their representational contents.

There are many different, useful classification systems that can be used to describe and organise text types. These can come from differing linguistic and socio-linguistic traditions and viewpoints and are reliant on emphases on very different criteria of categorisation. For example, Halliday's (as in, for example, Halliday & Martin 1993) systemic-functional grammar relies on an understanding and measurement of the frequency of a range of internal lexico-grammatical features for the determination of text typology. Biber (1989), initially also suggested a need to rely on internal text analysis to lead to a relation between the text and certain external functions of the text. Bhatia (1993), on the other hand, advocates classifying texts into genre through an examination of external criteria such as the socio-cultural environment and composition of the author and audience and elements of the relationship between them. Biber (1993) later suggests that a satisfactory classification of texts can be achieved through a cyclical process involving texts selected by external criteria which are then subject to analysis of their internal linguistic structures which, in turn, leads to actual classification of the texts. This is an ongoing process that can considerably refine the classification categories. In comparison with these approaches this study is restricted in its possibilities for text identification and classification as the fact that the texts are communicated through the channel of the Internet strips them, to a greater or lesser extent, of many of the external criteria that might be used for determination of text type.

The term Internet text is itself, of course, a misnomer as a generalisation since the different modes of communication possible through the Internet give rise to texts with

varying degrees and types of knowable and measurable criteria. The focus here has been on web pages. These have, perhaps, the lowest level of discriminability when it comes to such external criteria as identification of author, author authority and veracity, author's intentions, author's intended readership and relationship with the readership, author's own socio-cultural environment. This is not a disadvantage given that in other, more superficially identifiable acts of Internet-mediated communication, such as chat rooms or role-playing virtual communities, there are often attempts to hide or alter identity, attitude and function which are then difficult for the researcher to penetrate. These manipulations within and of text have been well documented (Donath 1999, Smith 1999) and are multiform in their type and effect, ranging from, for example, category deception (e.g. of gender: O'Brien 1999, Turkle, 1995) to impersonation (Donath 1999) and concealment (May 1994). The texts selected for this study, then, exist on a level playing field to the extent that no assumptions can be made about most of the external criteria relating to text production. Text consumption is imitated by the ethnographic researcher who attempts, in as neutral a manner as possible, to interact with the texts in a manner consistent with the description of the supposed target readership, that is business people researching online information about upcoming intercultural encounters in Portugal with the Portuguese.

3.4.2 Discourse and Genre Analysis

These considerations as to text type and classification led this study to focus more on the internal criteria available to the researcher. This internal criteria approach is useful for a number of reasons because discourse, in the sense used here, is not merely text subjected to analysis of its linguistic components but a setting of these components within the social uses to which such discourse is contingent. Texts collected during the study were classified for both their text type, or genre, and the discourse features that they contain. The selection of these discourse features was dependent on the needs of the 'reader' function as undertaken by the researcher. Genre was considered important in terms of analysing which parts of the discourse community were representing the Portuguese business community in specific ways. Discourse analysis was used as a tool for accessing the cultural representations themselves as well as supplying a system for classifying these representations according to information related to author purpose and author experience. Genre analysis and discourse analysis come together to provide an overall view, for the benefit of the students, as to who is saying what about Portugal and what they mean by it. Knowing where to find, in a virtual sense, any specifically-defined cultural representation of Portugal would enable students to monitor and engage with the producers and consumers of these representations should they feel the need to do so.

The discourse analysis classification chosen in this study is based largely on the theoretical framework devised by Shi-Xu (1995, 1997) which resulted from empirical studies carried out into a number of situations involving at-distance cross-cultural communication. Shi-Xu's 1997 study, for example, focuses on both oral and written representational discourse. The oral discourse is a series of recorded interviews with Chinese expatriates who are commenting on their experience of living in Holland. The written discourse is taken from a corpus of Dutch travel literature on travel in China. Although these texts were not published on the Internet, they were produced as reportage and as impressions, with no fixed or fixable readership in mind. This experiential orientation of the texts, together with the fact that they were produced for an unknown readership gives them a qualitative level of similarity to the type of texts that have been looked at in this study. The type of analysis carried out by Shi-Xu also seems appropriate because:

'The point is that concepts, when looked at in their 'ecological' discourse context, seem to be the products of socio-discursive processes (e.g. definition, categorization, comparison, and exemplification). More importantly, they seem to have an irreducible social orientation (e.g. maintenance of desired identities or avoidance of conflict). (Shi-Xu 1997:146)

Thus, Shi-Xu analysed the texts in such a way as to draw out the socially determined motivations and purposes that lead to the construction of the discourse. Discourse, in Shi-Xu's analysis, acts not only as a repository of culturally-oriented information but as a pragmatic force which seeks to act upon the reader in such a way as to achieve a social end. Consumption of the discourse unavoidably leads to the formation of mental hypotheses as to the meaning of the cultural or sociological information embedded in it. This hypothesis-forming may be carried out at the subconscious level by the general reader, but the target readers in this study are assumed to be consciously directing their reading to the discovery of just such cultural constructs. The business person seeking information on business culture in Portugal will be consciously unearthing and internally negotiating the meaning of the texts in terms of their cultural information content, together with other relevant information forms that are being searched for.

Although the functions of the texts in this study may not be the same as those examined in the Dutch-Chinese encounter, it is through the discovery of such socially-oriented functions that it is possible, firstly, to see representations of the cultural other in action. They are the building blocks, perceived as essential truths or confirmed or discovered stereotypes, that the text author uses to underpin and justify the socially-oriented attitudes and illocutionary functions that the text may exhibit.

This discourse analysis approach to the representational texts has led to the adoption of a comprehensive classification scheme of dimensions of discourse which has been borrowed and adapted from Shi-Xu (1997) and applied to the texts under the following headings:

- Cultural Attitudes and Attitudinal Discourse
- Cultural Attributions and Attributional Discourse
- Cultural Perceptions and Perceptual Discourse
- Cultural Opinions and Opinion Discourse

These classifications are not whole types of discourse but rather dimensions that feature across most discourse types. Whole texts do not necessarily or even often fall neatly into a single category but contain elements of the various discourse dimensions as described in the following sections.

3.4.2.1 Cultural Attitudes and Attitudinal Discourse

Attitudes in general can be formed in a number of ways: through direct experience of the cultural other; less directly through second-hand experience or fictional representation or more indirectly through opinionated argumentation. Attitudinal discourse, or, more precisely, attitudinal representations in discourse relate to the socio-cultural functions of stance and evaluation. Almost all discourse, however seemingly objective or factual, carries some affective charge and hence encoded attitude. In this discourse dimension, the author either consciously uses the discourse to express attitude towards the cultural other or, possibly, subconsciously allows the attitude to be shaped by the discourse itself. In the first case, where attitude is expressed referentially in the discourse, the author may write such indicators as *‘these are the reasons the problem exists’* or even more directly *‘I can’t see why they need to do this’*. In the second case, attitude is determined more inferentially, such as when the author claims *‘these are the facts as they stand’* or *‘in their own words’*. The author is allowing the reader to create the attitude for themselves but is careful to indicate that this is necessary but signposting the distance between the author’s own cultural vantage point and the position of the other.

Stance can be created through a number of sub-functions in the discourse. In terms of the expression of positive attitude the author might, for example, express admiration for achievements juxtaposed with difficult starting conditions for that achievement. Alternatively, the author might defend behaviours as being unavoidable due to circumstances or in terms of being the considered choice of the lesser of two evils. A

third possibility involves claiming that a particular behaviour is a necessary means to achieve a greater end or that one negative behaviour is more than balanced out by a linked positive one. A fourth, and another function which is based on defending the behaviour of the target community, is enacted when the author expresses the attitude of *'it's alright for them to do that'*. This normally implies that although such behaviour is acceptable within such a society, it would not be tolerated within the society to which the author belongs. A similar function involves distancing the author from the scene of action of the behaviour. That is, the author implies that the behaviour is acceptable because it does not or would not impinge directly upon the author, or the cultural self. This may be either because members of the observed community are aware that such behaviour would not be welcome or because anyone from the author's cultural background visiting the other would not be geographically or temporally subjected to such behaviour.

When expressing negative stance towards the cultural other, authors tend to be more direct and more comparative. Comparisons may be made with other cultures, universally accepted norms or the self. It should be noted that such comparisons are not uniquely associated with negative stance, especially in the case of the self-depreciative self, but are often so. Alternatively, behaviour may be explained by general social circumstance, such as lack of development, that the cultural other can only implicitly be blamed for. Historical precedent and tradition, and the repetition of what are perceived to be mistakes, is another context within which negative stance may be couched. This latter context enables the author to evaluate the contemporary other without attaching blame and so without the need to feel any guilt, or fear of comeback, about the judgement made. This is a particularly powerful context when the cultural other is perceived to value tradition and historical achievement highly.

There is also the attitude that the cultural other expresses about themselves. In other words, those aspects of cultural behaviour that the other is particularly proud, or possibly ashamed, of. These behaviours often receive particular attention in attitudinal discourse as the author feels the necessity to deal with the cultural other's stated value system as much as with the behaviour that emanates from it.

The original discourse classification headings that Shi-Xu proposed were conceived in relation to a study involving Dutch writers commenting on Chinese culture and focussed on the overwhelmingly negative perceptions that resulted, largely, from such a wide cultural gap. Although some of the texts in the current study also reflect very different cultural norms to those which the authors of the texts experienced in Portugal, the majority of the perceptions found were not cast in such a negative light. Moreover, this

study did not want to presuppose the affective value of the expressed socio-cultural behaviours so they were analysed in terms of their being neutral, positive or negative in nature. Neutral was taken to mean that either there was no discernible author attitude towards the target culture or that the attitudes expressed were balanced between negatively and positively-oriented affective statements. If different authors recorded different affective attitudes towards the same cultural behaviour then these were recorded separately with their relevant attitudinal value.

3.4.2.2 Cultural Attributions and Attributional Discourse

Attributional discourse seeks to explain why something happens, in this case why the behaviour of the other is the way that it is. It is an important tool in the social construction of the cultural identity of the other, in that it enables the author to interpret noticed and perceived behaviour in such a way as to be able to construct an identity that fits the socio-cultural function in hand. The attributions contained in such discourse patterns may be of a wide variety of types, such as physical cause, motivation, belief, personality or circumstances. They may be explicitly verbalised in the text or they may be implicitly referred to.

Authors do not usually use this type of discourse simply for neatness of argument, attribution is a tool that is part of the author's socio-cultural repertoire that is normally employed when something is problematic, most normally in the sense of being different from the self. The same perceived behaviour, passing through the differently socio-culturally functioned hands of two different authors may lead to the construction or reinforcement of two different representations. Equally, two different behaviours explained by a single cause may also lead to construction of different representations. For example, behaviour may be explained away in order to minimise difference between the self and the other, by postulating that the other is merely the victim of circumstance. This would lead to the construction of a representation of the other which appears more reasonable. On the other hand, the same cause could be used to emphasise the moral inferiority of the other, as the other fails to react to the circumstance. It is also possible, and perhaps more relevant to the case of the information researcher who is building meaning, that a range of attributable causes can be used to build up and reinforce a certain group of related representations. The more reasons the author gives, the more reasonable the proffered representations become. The attributions contained in discourse are relevant to this study in their socio-cultural manifestations. These attributions are put to use by the consumers of the text within their own socio-cultural environment. They are used to help the text consumer build up a specific identity profile and develop specific orientations towards the described community. This study

assumes, therefore, that such attributions are acted upon by the reader and are incorporated into the building of cultural representations during reading online.

3.4.2.3 Cultural Perceptions and Perceptual Discourse

The information that might be recorded in a web page text referring to experience of the other, especially where this is based on direct experience through visits and concomitant cultural interaction will often be essentially perceptual in nature. This discourse will refer to, describe, implicate, interpret and pre-suppose perceptual experiences as well as justify, challenge, explain, compare and exemplify the author's and others' versions of perception. This is what Shi-Xu (1997:148) terms perceptual discourse. This type of discourse is also used for attaining social objectives. It does have direct referential or data value but the readers, and, by extension, the researcher, will pay attention to its social dimension. In perceptual discourse, then, representations of the other are made available to the reader not through automatic analysis and interpretation of the linguistic content of the discourse but through an understanding of those socio-cultural functions being employed by the writer. There is, therefore, an element of purposeful and interactive, though not necessarily conscious, orientation and consumption of the strategies used to construct cultural representations of the other on the part of the author and reader respectively. Perception, and the reporting of perception, is two-fold in its nature, being derived from both an observed context as well as socially-oriented discursive activity.

The classification of experiential based discourse as perceptual is highly relevant to this study since authors are interpreted as expressing not opinions or beliefs but facts that result from direct experience, observation or interpretation. This type of discourse will present a higher validity to the reader searching for usable cultural information than discourse which is derivative, pure marketeering or overtly opinionated. As a result, the web page sources considered for this study are largely of a perceptual discourse nature. This type of discourse also lends itself to analysis in that it is relatively easy to extract the socio-cultural functions employed by the authors as they relay that which they perceive to be worth reporting from all that they saw, heard or were told about the other.

Shi-Xu (1997: 147-151) argues that not only do authors tend to write into their texts that which they perceive to be different or surprising about the other but that they, consciously or unconsciously, do so in such a way as to express the behaviour of the other not in terms of absolute reality, were such a thing possible, but in normative comparative terms in which the norm is taken to be the cultural behaviour acceptable in the author's own socio-cultural context. This in-built subjectivity helps to make interpretation of the texts, and a classification of the perception-based attitudes

expressed, an easier task.

As most web writing is anonymous, it is not possible to reconstruct the socio-cultural environment of the author in any definitive sense but it does make this anonymity easier to disregard when drawing conclusions since it can be assumed that all authors are subject to this tendency to report their experiences in terms of direct, and often pejorative, comparison with their own socio-cultural norms. If a reasonably wide range of texts is considered, then it can be assumed that a wide range of socio-cultural norms is also represented and, as a consequence, that many different facets of the other's cultural behaviour will be brought to light and commented on. A range here is interpreted as being not only a number of different types of written genre but also reporting from different geographic locations, as defined by the location of the web pages themselves. This consideration of range is important since it is not possible to know exactly which genres of web pages consumers of online discourse will attend to, although it is possible to make reasonable conjecture. The level of subjectivity in perceptual discourse may be apparent or masked, according to the author's intentions. The masking of subjectivity is often accomplished through the use of reportage language which superficially appears to objectify the text and author. It is not possible within the scope of this study to make different allowance for different levels of subjectivity in the text and their effect on the reader, particularly since the classification as to levels of subjectivity, where the text does not make it plain, would itself be a subjective process. It is probably true, though, that the more overtly objective a text is, the more attention a reader will pay to it. This is related to the discussion in the section above (see 2.3.4) on credibility of the text in that the more objective, impartial, institutional and authoritative the appearance of a text and its source, the more trust is placed in it.

As explained in the previous section, many of the web page texts that have been chosen for analysis are essentially reportage in that they contain descriptions, explanations and discussion of experientially gained or generated perceptions of the other. These texts have been analysed for the socio-cultural functions they contain, that is the culturally-descriptive comment that the author wishes to convey in relation to the other and by comparison with the author's own cultural norms.

3.4.2.4 Cultural Opinions and Opinion Discourse

Opinions may be defined as personal and subjective beliefs about the way the world operates. Opinion discourse is that in which these beliefs are explicitly or implicitly enunciated. This type of discourse may simply seek to set forth the author's personalised and subjective view of the world and this subjectivity will often be explicit

in the discourse through the use of such opinion discourse markers as: 'I think...' and 'In my opinion...' In its basic form this type of discourse allows authors to express their own viewpoint with relation to the world. Cultural opinion discourse, however, is often considerably more than subjective reflection on the world, particularly when it involves the characterisation of the other.

Studies have shown (Schiffrin, 1985 & 1990; van Eemeren and Grootendurst, 1992; Shi-Xu, 2000) that the embedding of cultural opinion in discourse is fundamental to the process whereby subjective opinion is transformed, by the discourse and the discourse structure, into cultural fact. There is a range of rhetorical tools available to the author of this type of discourse which aid this transformation process and enable validity and applicability of the opinion as cultural fact to be established. These tools include generalisation, appeals to common sense, historical precedent, metaphor, accumulation of points of view and repetition, appeals to authorities external to the text, appeals to the author's own reputation and many others. In a second stage, these opinions become firm cultural facts when they are contextualised through the use of explicit or implicit cultural arguments. These arguments may take a number of forms including the presentation of opinions as facts through their juxtaposition to known or given facts from the author's own culture. Another relevant form of argument is the distinguishing of patterns of culture through analysis of behaviours of both self and the other. The author may also argue that the opinions serve as facts that support a particular cultural concept or theory in an empirical sense. Whichever of these forms of argument are used, it is normally the case that they carry weight proportional to the presumed level of cultural sophistication, authority or fair-mindedness of the author. It is assumed that there is a particularly strong effect with Internet discourse, since, as discussed above (see 2.3.4), the reader makes trust judgements based on very little knowledge of the author. In the case where the author is, or is presumed to be, an acknowledged or referenced source, such as a government body, a travel writer, a successful business person or an experienced producer of such discourse, this investment of trust on the part of the text consumer aids the processes of changing subjective opinion into cultural fact.

3.4.2.5 Discourse Feature Criteria

The four discourse feature types, attitude, attribution, perception and opinion, can be seen to be qualitatively different in that they are based on differing levels of experience, different types of motivation and different text-based social functions. There is a strong possibility that different discourse types will be used in different ways in the processes of representing the behaviour of the Portuguese business community. Consequently, the texts analysed in this study have been characterised as to the type of discourse feature

that they show. There is no objective or automatic way to do this, rather the reader-researcher must analyse each text extract for the type of discourse feature it exhibits using subjective criteria. Table 5 shows the criteria classification used in this case.

Discourse Feature	Sample Criteria
Attitudinal	Presence of positive / negative adjectives Expression of preference, selection or rejection Pejorative or praising expressions Personal reaction or standpoint in relation to reported behaviours
Perception	Use of first person forms Relation of specific incidents and/or times Narrative tense Verbs of Perception Specific or local information content Direct quoting
Opinion	Generalisations Exemplification Opinion Markers Depersonalisation of reference to target culture Instructions or guidelines Use of assumptions / presumptions / conclusions Reference to other authority, work or cultures Appeal to common sense or reason Deliberately balanced points of view Inclusion of statistical facts and figures
Attributional	Cause and effect conjunctions Language of reasoning, argument, exemplification or explanation

Table 5 – Discourse Feature Selection Criteria

3.4.3 Summary of Text Analysis Procedure

In summary, the online reading part of the research procedure took place through a number of steps:

- The search strings were entered into the Google search engine to give results pages with 10 entries on each.
- Entries considered relevant were selected and skim read. Links were followed on some web pages. Web sites and the pages they contained were classified by genre as a further method of checking with the trial search results.

- After reading the whole textual content of the page, any parts of text referring to cultural behaviours, either explicitly or implicitly, were copied and put aside for analysis.
- A second search results page was considered in a few cases.
- When all the search results for a particular search string had been exhausted, the extracts were analysed for conceptual content in terms of topic area, discourse feature type, affective value and adjective-based summary of the underlying concepts.
- The results from each search string were compared with each other and, where possible, homogenised into broader categories.
- Web pages that were returned more than once, in different search results, were numerically summed, so that their frequency as returned result could be taken into consideration when aggregating the overall response.

3.5 Survey of the Cultural Other

As described in the introduction, this study is partially concerned with an outcome that is relevant to the teaching of cross-cultural communication skills to university students on a languages and business skills course. These students are potential future members, and some working-students already are members, of the Portuguese business community. They were selected for this study as a target group because any practical pedagogical outcome from this study may be applied during the time they are studying rather than waiting until they are fully operational members of the business community.

The course is four years long, with an in-service training period in the second half of the fourth year. In the first year of the course, the English disciplines are concerned with general language competences. In the second year the focus is on intercultural competence and the use of English as a tool for intercultural communication. The third year focus is on techniques of expression and revolves around practising negotiations in an intercultural environment. In the fourth year the students bring their knowledge from the previous three years together to produce a multimedia and multilingual product that is designed to communicate a company's image, product or service across cultures.

From this brief description it can be seen that the main focus on intercultural competence takes place in the second year. As a result, students in the third and fourth years were surveyed by questionnaire in this study so that any effects of the intercultural competence teaching already taking place would already be accounted for.

3.5.1 Survey Procedure

In order to sensitise students to the questionnaire task, they were asked to carry out a number of tasks in the weeks preceding the questionnaire. These tasks are summarised in Table 6

Task	Objective
Research information for a business trip to a country not previously visited	Sensitise students to the type of considerations business visitors might have in mind
Prepare a short welcoming speech for a foreign visitor	Sensitise students to the social needs of foreign visitors
Interview a local business person about their international contacts	Sensitise students to some of the communication and social questions that might arise during a visit.
Read, digest and report on a finance / economy story from the national press.	Sensitise the students to the larger economic and business picture in Portugal.

Table 6 – Pre-Survey Sensitisation Tasks

In a parallel stage, students who were not taking part in the survey were asked to brainstorm concepts, in the form of topics and adjectives, that they thought might be relevant to a description of various groups of people. Most of the topics that these students suggested and many of the adjectives were then incorporated into the questionnaire which can be found in Appendix 2.

The questionnaire was divided into five parts, the first of which was a simple check to see if the respondent had had any direct contact with English-speaking foreigners besides their teacher. The intention was to make it possible to investigate any differences in responses between those respondents who had had contact with people from English-speaking cultures and those that hadn't. The second part was topic-based. In an attempt to elicit not only how the students perceived their own culture but, additionally, information regarding how they think their culture is perceived from outside, this and subsequent questions were couched in terms of any interaction they may have had with members of other English-speaking cultures. As all of these students also speak a variety of other languages, it was also one way of trying to get them to focus on the attitudes of speakers of English, of whatever cultural grouping, rather than, say speakers of German or French. It is assumed that, in practice, students' perceptions and beliefs resulting from their contacts with people from all other cultures will merge together and they would not be able to separate out the representations held by different cultural groups. This focus on the English-speaking other, then, was in the nature of a

focussing and orienting manoeuvre in the design of the questionnaire rather than an intention that students should attempt to distinguish between different discourse communities.

In the second part, students were asked to select topics relevant to Portugal and also decide if they were regarded as being positive, negative or neutral in manner. In the third part, respondents were asked to select five of the most significant topics from the second part and list them separately, again with an attitudinal judgement. The purpose of both the second and third parts was to focus the students on areas of the life of the cultural group that are most likely to be considered notable by people from other cultures. These noticed characteristics are presumably also those that the respondents feel are fundamental components of areas of behaviour within which the specific group most commonly operates.

The fourth part of the questionnaire involved selecting adjectives that apply to the Portuguese. Some of these adjectives were directly related to the topics in the previous parts two and three. Examples include the adjectives: 'welcoming', 'reliable', 'bureaucratic' and 'poorly educated' from part four which correspond to the topics: 'hospitality', 'reliability', 'bureaucracy' and 'education' in part two. Some concepts were introduced for the first time in part four through adjectives such as: 'considerate', 'poetic', 'quality-oriented' and 'hierarchical'. These adjectives were based on an adaptive selection of a larger range of adjectives that had been suggested by a further group of students who did not take part in the survey. Additionally, there was an equal balance between adjectives with positive and negative affective connotations. As a further control, some of the adjectives were paired so that responses could be correlated. Part 5 was the only open part of the questionnaire in that students were asked to comment, in English or in Portuguese, on what foreign business visitors might think about Portugal.

Students responded to the first four parts of the questionnaire individually and during class time. The fifth part of the questionnaire was completed after a discussion debate on a range of aspects of life in Portugal. The topics for this discussion were prompted by short newspaper articles.

The intention of this questionnaire-based survey methodology was that the adjectives from part four and the topics from part three together with their perceived affective values would combine to give an overview of the cultural representations that students have of their own culture with some influence of how they believe others see them.

3.6 Expected Results

The results that were expected from this approach fall into several categories. The analysis of the online texts was expected to produce data consisting of the web site genres that contain information on the Portuguese business community, identifying information relating to the text authors, text extracts reflecting cultural representations of the target community and discourse feature data. Processing of this data would lead to isolation of the cultural representations of the Portuguese community in two main organisational fields. The first of these would be topically-arranged areas of social activity and the second conceptually-oriented adjectives designed to reflect the social behaviour patterns of the community. It was assumed that there would be some qualitative overlap between these two areas but that, broadly speaking, the first data set would be interpreted as being cultural representations of the target community in terms of what is perceived to be prominent, important or different about the social activities they carry out. The second data set would be interpreted as relating to the behaviours that the members of this community exhibit, largely when operating in the social activities described by the first data set. In these two senses, activity and behaviour, an identity profile of members of the community would be constructed using, as types, these cultural representations. The resulting profile would constitute a qualitative result in its overall aspect, but one that was based on quantitative and comparable data sets.

Similar data sets, topically and conceptually organised, would also be constructed out of the students' replies to the questionnaires and they would be processed in a similar way to give a parallel identity profile. These two profiles would then form the basis for a quantitative comparison of the data sets with a view to identifying similarities and differences in the underlying data and, hence, in the overall typed or stereotyped view of the other, in the case of the online discourse, and for the self, in the case of the student group.

The other information: genre, author identity and discourse feature, would be used to categorise, organise and typify the cultural representation data so that a description of the occurrence of the cultural representations in online discourse could be as complete as possible. This description, depending on its level of completeness, may be useful in identifying which members of the discourse community are saying what about the Portuguese business community and how they are saying it. Any such information could be usefully built into a teaching syllabus at a later date.

As the methodology itself does not presuppose the comparison of the results with any particular theory about what the results should show, it is not possible to make more specific predictions about the expected results.

4 Results

This section presents the results of the empirical part of the study. The results for the two halves of the study, the analysis of the online discourse and the questionnaire survey of the students, will be presented separately. The relationship between these two sets of results will be discussed in the following section (5.3).

4.1 Online Discourse Analysis Results

4.1.1 Search Results

The complete Google search pages resulting from the search strings may be found in Appendix 3. These search strings used led to a total of 58 separate web sites as shown in Table 7.

Site Base URL	Hits	Site Base URL	Hits
http://www.executiveplanet.com	11	http://www.portugalloffer.com	10
http://www.portugalvirtual.pt	8	http://www.fco.gov.uk	7
http://www.portugalinbusiness.com	7	http://www.escapeartist.com	6
http://news.bbc.co.uk	5	http://strategis.ic.gc.ca	5
http://www.buyusainfo.net	5	http://www.lonelyplanet.com	5
http://www.luxurylink.com	5	http://eb.eiu.com	4
http://www.eurofound.eu.int	4	http://www.portcult.com	4
http://britishexpats.com	3	http://economist.com	3
http://www.cityguide.travel-guides.com	3	http://www.europe-today.com	3
http://www.expedia.co.uk	3	http://www.geocities.com	3
http://www.horizontraveller.com	3	http://www.ricksteves.com	3
http://europa.eu.int	2	http://lcweb2.loc.gov	2
http://the-news.net	2	http://www.a2zlanguages.com	2
http://www.aoqv41.dsl.pipex.com	2	http://www.buryfreepress.co.uk	2
http://www.dhl-usa.com	2	http://www.eurograduate.com	2
http://www.jb-ep.pt	2	http://www.virtualtourist.com	2
http://www.windowontheworldinc.com	2	http://exchanges.state.gov	1
http://iwwraw.igc.org	1	http://manila.djh.dk	1
http://www.ajwww.com/tools_cultural.html	1	http://www.algarvememories.com	1

http://www.archersdirect.co.uk	1	http://www.atop.org	1
http://www.cyber-adventures.com	1	http://www.eurochambres.be	1
http://www.findarticles.com	1	http://www.gov.mb.ca	1
http://www.igc.gulbenkian.pt	1	http://www.kwintessential.co.uk	1
http://www.lxxl.pt	1	http://www.macosx.com	1
http://www.montagar.com	1	http://www.moviments.net	1
http://www.playdrums.com	1	http://www.portugalgolfcourses.com	1
http://www.portugal-live.net	1	http://www.restaurantreport.com	1
http://www.snowmedia.net	1	http://www.thetravelzine.com	1
http://www.travelgolf.com	1	http://www.varbusiness.com	1

Table 7 – Online Discourse: Main Site URLs

The influence of each site in the overall analysis is indicated by the numbers in Table 7. Each time a search string led to a particular site that had already been visited, this number was increased by one. These numbers were then used as multiplication factors in the determination of the overall result. Initially there were 63 sites in the list but 5 of these failed the relevancy criteria since they were no longer available after a period of two weeks.

Each of these sites contained one or more relevant web pages giving a total of 92 separate web pages for analysis. The page URLs are listed in full in Appendix 4 together with the number of conceptual extracts, in the form of short excerpts, extracted from each web page. The total number of extracts was 383, or an average of 4,16 extracts per page. This appears to be quite a high average, but this is due to the nature of a few, long, pages which contained information in many sections. The median number of extracts for the 92 pages was 3 and the mode was 1. The pages described in Table 8 returned particularly numerous, different, extracts that referred to the target community:

Site Ref.	Web address	N^o Extracts	Site Genre
web054	http://www.luxurylink.com/Virtual/DestDisplay.phtml?id=90123	20	Multi-sectioned Cultural Guide
web082	http://www.kwintessential.co.uk/resources/global-etiquette/portugal.html	20	Multi-sectioned Cultural Guide
web007	http://www.executiveplanet.com/business-	18	Cultural Guide

	culture-in/137612391390.html		List
web085	http://www.gov.mb.ca/labour/immigrate/multiculturalism/2_3.html#21	16	Multi-sectioned Cultural Guide
web015	http://www.portcult.com/Portugal.01.INTRODUCTION.01.htm	13	Text Rich Home Page
web083	http://www.eurograduate.com/marketreports/culture-matters/culture.html	13	Report
web003	http://www.executiveplanet.com/business-culture-in/137606601140.html	12	Cultural Guide List
web008	http://www.executiveplanet.com/business-culture-in/137613184375.html	12	Cultural Guide List
web033	http://www.portcult.com/Portugal.03.FAMILY.htm#children	11	Text Rich Home Page
web069	http://www.windowontheworldinc.com/countryprofile/portugal.html	11	Multi-sectioned Cultural Guide
web017	http://www.portcult.com/Portugal.62.Portuguese_irrelevancy.htm	10	Text Rich Home Page
web018	http://www.portcult.com/Portugal.02.NATIONALISM.2.htm	10	Text Rich Home Page

Table 8 – Web Pages Containing Multiple Conceptual Information

As can be seen, most of these are lengthy cultural guides covering a wide variety of topic areas and behaviour types. The complete web pages that were analysed may be found in Appendix 5, and the text contents of each page in Appendix 6. The text was extracted from the web sites using the online extraction tool, BTE, provided by the Smart Media Institute of the University of Dublin (available at <http://www.smi.ucd.ie/hyppia/bte/>).

4.1.1.1 Online Text Genre Types

Both the web pages and the texts were classified into genre type for later comparison, and validation, with the results from the trial search on the Austrian business community. The genre categories used are adaptations of those proposed by Firth & Cameron (2003) and Eissen & Stein (2004). The results of this classification process are shown in Table 9

Web Page Genre	Nº	Text Genre	Nº
Business Culture Guide	18	Article	40
Personal Home Page	12	Guide Entry	11
General Travel Guide	11	Report	11

General Country Guide	7	Message	6
Newspaper	6	Magazine Article	6
Forum	5	News Article	6
Government / NGO Country Guide	5	List Point	5
Magazine	4	Academic Paper	3
B2B Profile	4	Caption	1
Report	3	Minutes	1
Academic Journal	3	Diary Entry	1
General Culture Guide	3	Blog Entry	1
Government / NGO Country Commercial Guide	3		
Specialist Activity Guide	2		
News Magazine	2		
Blog	1		
EU Report	1		
Meeting Minutes	1		
Travelogue	1		

Table 9 – Online Discourse: Web Page and Text Genre Types

4.1.2 Discourse Features

It was found that the same web sites, and hence the same web pages and text extracts, were returned by more than one search. The total number of times each web site was returned by all the searches undertaken is shown in Table 7 (in the hits column). In order to give a realistic weighting to the sites that were more frequently returned, on the assumption that they have a bigger influence within the discourse community as a whole, the number of times each site was returned was used as a multiplication factor. This multiplication factor was applied to both the topics and concepts resulting from analysis of the text extracts.

On a page by page basis, the 383 text extracts were read and classified according to the discourse features they contain. Texts were initially classified as perceptual / opinion or attributional according to the criteria laid out in Table 5. On a further reading, the texts were then classified as to whether or not they reflected the author's attitude towards the target culture. This attitude was classified as being either positive, negative or neutral. Some texts were plainly negative and others plainly positive. Others contained either no clear evidence of the author's attitude or they reflected a roughly mixture of positive and negative attitudes. Both of these latter types of text were classified as neutral.

Examples of how these discourse feature classifications were assigned are shown in Table 10 which also shows examples of the classification into positive, negative and neutral attributes.

Text Extract	Attitude	Opinion	Perception	Attribution	Attitude
Sometimes there is condescension and words like "pobrecito" are frequently heard, because of the obvious economic differences between the two countries			✓	✓	neutral
The Portuguese couple take the teasing in a remarkably good spirit.	✓		✓		positive
Many Portuguese do not like the Spanish. Ask about Spain and sometimes there is an emotional response. Spanish food is horrendous, the coffee is undrinkable,		✓			neutral
Much of the reason for this derives from the chaotic conditions of the traffic and the high speed of the cars passing near the school zones	✓		✓	✓	negative
It is clear that the majority of women have very hard working conditions, minimal wages and hardly any prospect of training and advancement in a vocational career.	✓	✓			negative

Table 10 – Sample Classification of Discourse Features in Text Extracts

The full discourse feature classification for all the text extracts may be found in Appendix 9. Figure 3 shows the online discourse features exhibited by the 383 text extracts. The total sample number is actually 391 as there are 8 text extracts which show both opinion and perception discourse features. Figure 4 shows the discourse features of the online text extracts with the multiplying effect of the number of times the text was returned as a search result taken into effect. This graph shows that there is a significant effect within the overall discourse corpus, that is the production of the whole discourse community, which shows more attitudinal discourse features than the individual texts themselves. In both cases, however, the occurrence of opinion discourse is

approximately double that of perception discourse.

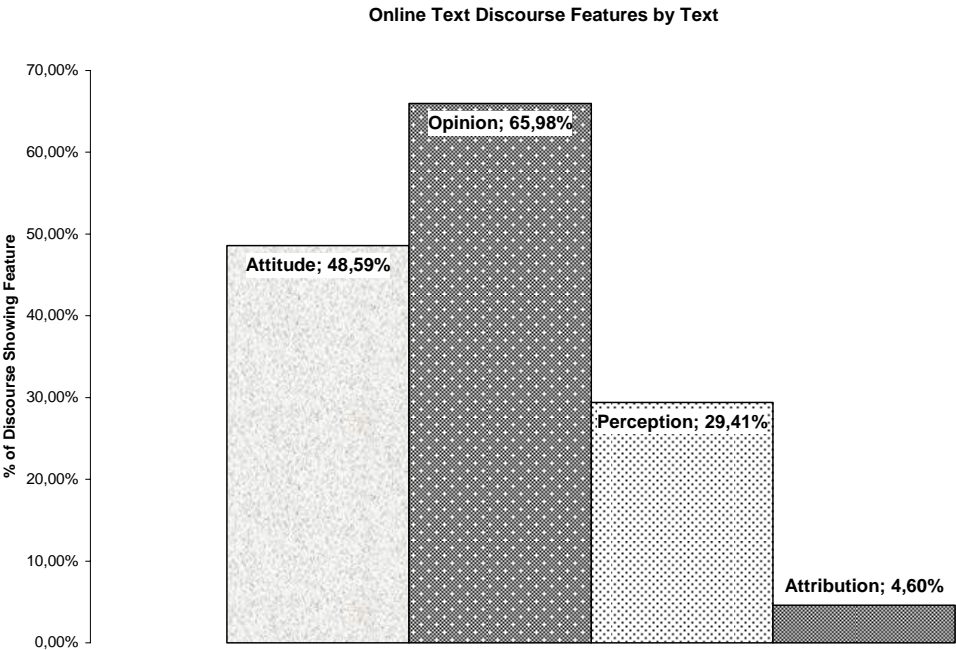


Figure 3 – Online Text Discourse Features by Text Extract

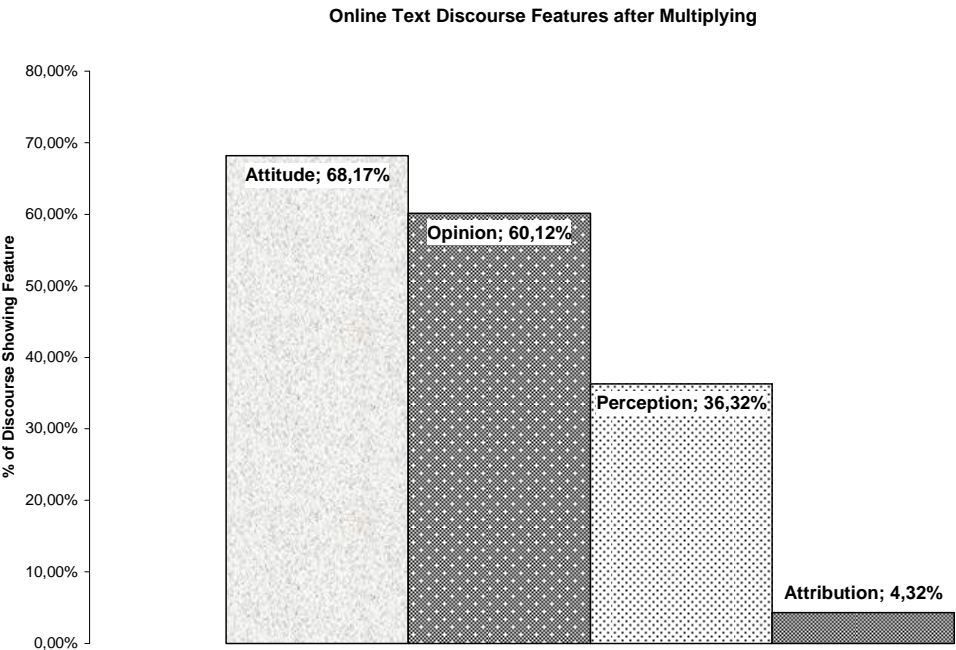


Figure 4 – Discourse Features Shown by Total Discourse Community

The relationship between genre and discourse feature is shown in Table 11 below

Genre from Discourse Community	Discourse Feature			
	% Attitude	% Opinion	% Perception	% Attribution
Academic Journal	25.00%	100.00%	0.00%	0.00%
B2B Profile	83.33%	88.89%	11.11%	0.00%
Blog	0.00%	100.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Business Culture Guide	55.91%	63.78%	34.65%	1.57%
EU Report	100.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100.00%
Forum	70.00%	30.00%	70.00%	0.00%
General Country Guide	19.44%	83.33%	16.67%	0.00%
General Culture Guide	33.33%	100.00%	0.00%	0.00%
General Travel Guide	57.89%	57.89%	42.11%	0.00%
Government / NGO Country Commercial Guide	45.45%	81.82%	9.09%	9.09%
Government /NGO Country Guide	16.00%	88.00%	0.00%	12.00%
Magazine	12.50%	12.50%	75.00%	12.50%
Meeting Minutes	50.00%	0.00%	100.00%	0.00%
News Magazine	83.33%	83.33%	16.67%	0.00%
Newspaper	70.00%	40.00%	55.00%	5.00%
Personal Home Page	50.00%	58.82%	27.94%	13.24%
Report	25.00%	62.50%	37.50%	0.00%
Specialist Guide	100.00%	0.00%	100.00%	0.00%
Travelogue	66.67%	0.00%	100.00%	0.00%

Table 11 – Relationship between Genre and Discourse Feature in Online Texts

This information is represented graphically in Figures 5 – 8, on the next two pages. Genres tend not to be restricted to a single discourse feature and there are clearly visible patterns in the distribution of discourse feature across genre type. In general terms, official and semi-official government, NGO and company web pages contain high proportions of opinion discourse. Magazine, newspaper and forum style pages, together with travelogues and other specialist guides show predominantly perception style discourse features. Attitude discourse is much more commonly encountered together with perception or attributional discourse rather than with opinion discourse.

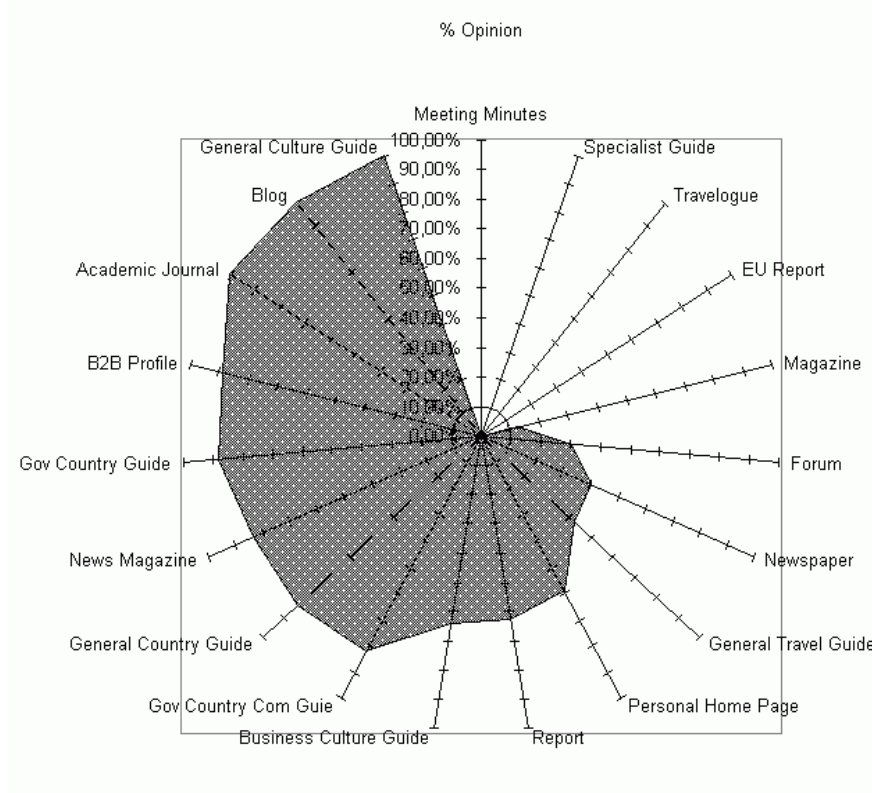


Figure 5 – Distribution of opinion discourse feature across text genre

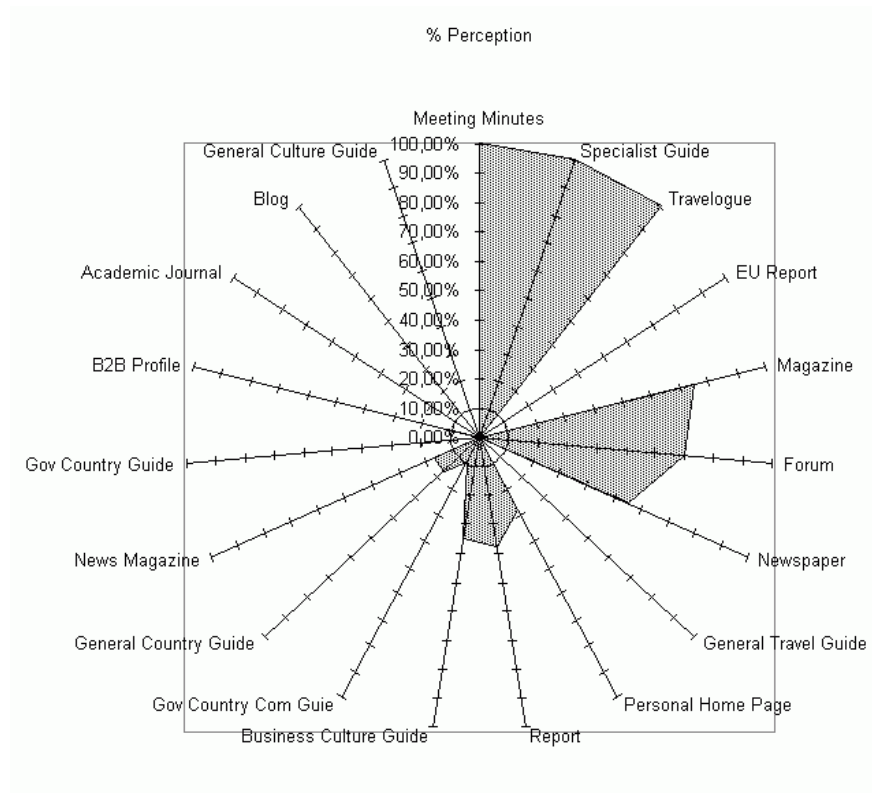


Figure 6 - Distribution of perception discourse feature across text genre

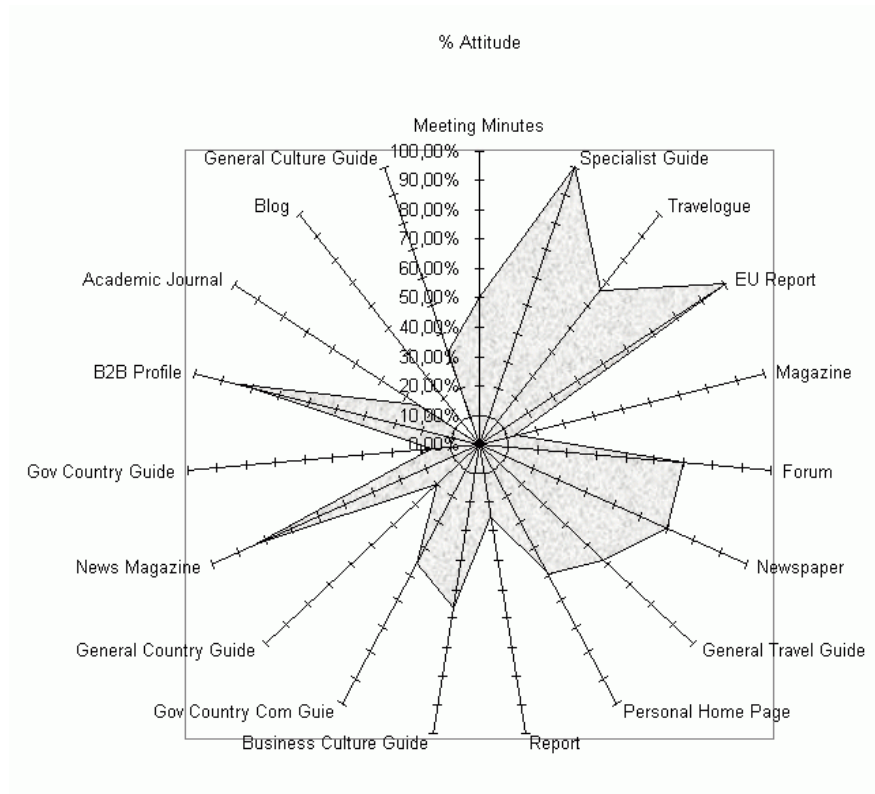


Figure 7 - Distribution of attitude discourse feature across text genre

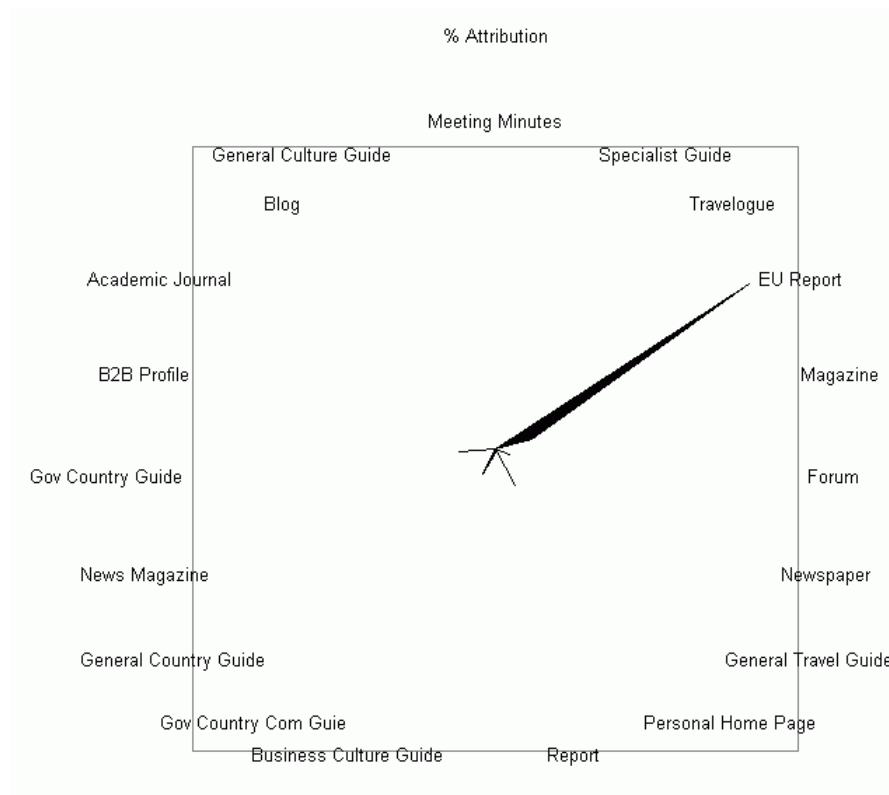


Figure 8 – Distribution of attributional discourse feature across text genre

4.1.3 Topic Analysis

The text extracts were then analysed for two complementary components. The first of these is the topic or area of life that the text extract refers to. Examples of how these topics were assigned are shown in Table 12.

Table 12 – Sample Classification of Topics in Text Extracts

Text Extract	Topic 1	Topic 2
The evolution of Portuguese society does, nevertheless, show changes which, overall, should be regarded as highly positive for women.	gender relations	
The language barrier really is not a problem. Either the person speaks some English or they will find someone who does. English is the second language and is widely understood, except in some of the remote areas.	communication	
Don't expect super-efficient service, though.	efficiency	
They are always eager to share things that are typical of Portugal, especially food and wine.	nationalism	food
Doing business in Lisbon is far less bureaucratic than it used to be but can still require a lot of patience,	bureaucracy	
Aggressiveness is not yet keen in marketing because it may be interpreted as socially offensive.	style of doing business	
The Portuguese will cheerfully admit that they don't have quite the same concept of time as Americans.	time	
the country still has the highest on-the-job accident rate in Europe, almost double the average.	safety	

The full topic classification of the text extracts may be found in Appendix 9. These topics have been collated in Table 13. It should be noted that the total number of topics is actually higher than the number of extracts since a number of extracts referred to more than one topic or area of life.

Table 13 – Topics Addressed in Online Discourse

	% of all topics			
topic	positive	neutral	negative	total
style of doing business	1.07%	8.97%	1.71%	11.75%

sociability	5.98%	3.85%	0.21%	10.04%
family	0.00%	4.70%	0.85%	5.56%
gender relations	1.50%	2.99%	0.85%	5.34%
development	1.92%	1.50%	1.50%	4.91%
time	0.64%	2.99%	1.07%	4.70%
tradition	0.64%	3.21%	0.64%	4.49%
Spain	0.21%	3.21%	0.85%	4.27%
lifestyle	1.71%	1.71%	0.21%	3.63%
status	0.00%	1.92%	1.71%	3.63%
food	1.28%	1.71%	0.43%	3.42%
communication	1.71%	1.07%	0.21%	2.99%
formality	0.21%	2.35%	0.43%	2.99%
profile	0.43%	1.92%	0.43%	2.78%
efficiency	0.43%	0.21%	1.71%	2.35%
productivity	1.07%	0.21%	0.85%	2.14%
economy	0.43%	0.64%	1.07%	2.14%
flexibility	1.28%	0.64%	0.00%	1.92%
past	0.21%	1.07%	0.64%	1.92%
hierarchy	0.00%	1.07%	0.85%	1.92%
honesty	0.43%	0.21%	1.28%	1.92%
appearance	0.00%	1.50%	0.21%	1.71%
driving	0.00%	0.00%	1.71%	1.71%
nationalism	0.43%	1.07%	0.00%	1.50%
religion	0.00%	1.28%	0.21%	1.50%
sport	0.64%	0.21%	0.21%	1.07%
safety	0.43%	0.00%	0.64%	1.07%
bureaucracy	0.00%	0.00%	1.07%	1.07%
learning	0.21%	0.21%	0.43%	0.85%
racism	0.00%	0.21%	0.43%	0.64%
language	0.21%	0.21%	0.00%	0.43%
sense of humour	0.21%	0.21%	0.00%	0.43%
politics	0.00%	0.43%	0.00%	0.43%

sea	0.00%	0.43%	0.00%	0.43%
trust	0.00%	0.43%	0.00%	0.43%
health	0.00%	0.00%	0.43%	0.43%
fairness	0.21%	0.00%	0.00%	0.21%
violence	0.21%	0.00%	0.00%	0.21%
creativity	0.00%	0.21%	0.00%	0.21%
gift-giving	0.00%	0.21%	0.00%	0.21%
homogeneity	0.00%	0.21%	0.00%	0.21%
sensitivity	0.00%	0.21%	0.00%	0.21%
corruption	0.00%	0.00%	0.21%	0.21%

Figure 9 shows the same information in a graphical form. For clarity, only the 20 most mentioned topics have been included in the graph. This graph and a graph of all the topic results from the online text analysis, together with all other graphs resulting from this study, are reproduced in a larger size in Appendix 7.

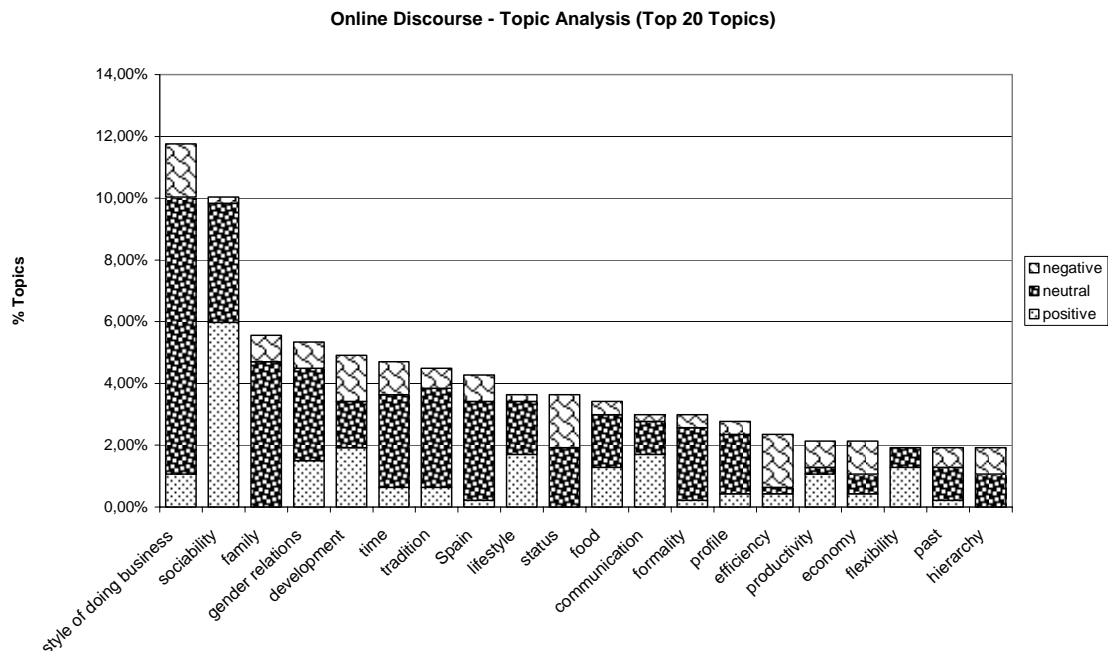


Figure 9 – Topic Analysis (Top 20 Topics) of Online Discourse Extracts

4.1.4 Concept Analysis

The text extracts were next analysed for conceptual content in terms of the type of behaviour that the Portuguese community exhibits. It should be noted that many extracts referred specifically to the Portuguese business community and many to the Portuguese community as a whole. No distinction has been made between these two types of reference because, firstly, there is no clear dividing line between comments made in reference to the business community and comments made in reference to the general community and, secondly, the reference was not always clear. However, all of these comments resulted from business-oriented search strings and so have been considered relevant. These conceptualisations have been reduced to mainly adjectival form for the purposes of quantitative analysis and comparison with the results from the student survey questionnaire. Each extract was the source for up to four adjectives. Examples of how these adjectives were assigned are shown in Table 14

Table 14 – Sample Classification of Concepts in Text Extracts

Text Extract	Concept 1	Concept 2	Concept 3
Nevertheless, the Portuguese are usually aware that foreigners operate differently	interculturally competent		
However, there are subtleties about the 'right' kind of jacket, shirt and tie which are too complicated to bother about, so I still always go for the standard suit.	complicated	fussy	image-conscious
Consensus rather than winner/loser tends to be the underlying philosophy.	cooperative		
The idea for lunch is to get to know your business partner as a person.	friendly	relationship-building	people-oriented
This is still a moderately sexist culture but men are used to women in positions of authority, so while you are unlikely to come across much overtly sexist behaviors, do not be totally surprised if they arise.	gender inequality	gender equality	
If only Salazar were alive, he wouldn't allow these forest fires, or these drug addicts, or programs like Big Brother, or this lack of respect for elders	sad	nostalgic	pessimistic
Most people in the world have no concept of what a Portuguese would be like.	unimportant	obscure	

Lisbon, the graceful 850-year-old capital, has the glass-paned office buildings, fashionable stores and modern airport of any European city.	modern	cosmopolitan	
A few of our neighbors kept us up a lot longer than we would have liked by having extremely loud telephone conversations and turning their TV volume to maximum.	noisy	inconsiderate	
As we have noted many times in our visits to Portugal there are more pastelarias (pastry shops) per street than in any other place we have visited.	food-loving		

The full concept classification for all the text extracts may be found in Appendix 10. In keeping with the methodology of the grounded theory approach, the overall adjectival classification in terms of the adjectives applied to specific text extracts was re-examined after each web page had been dealt with and the total number of adjectives cyclically reduced to a still meaningful minimum. That is, the attribution of adjectives to a text was reviewed, and in many cases the adjectives were renamed, on each occasion that extracts from a new web site were analysed. This resulted in a total of 176 different adjectives which had been applied to the whole text extract corpus. These were then grouped and re-named in a further data reduction process to give the 74 groups shown in Table 15.

Table 15 – Grouped Adjectivally Expressed Concepts

Groups	Named	% of Total Occurrences	Main Attitude
relationship-building / friendly / people-oriented / sociable / party-oriented / need to please	sociable	11.19	positive
laid back / maintain life / work balance in favour of life / relaxed / food-loving / informal	laid back	6.67	positive
inefficient / lazy / unbusinesslike / unproductive / indecisive	inefficient	4.79	negative

inferior / deferent / ambivalent relationship with Spain	inferior	3.62	negative
interculturally competent / proficient linguists	interculturally competent	3.42	positive
cautious / circumspect / secretive / indirect	cautious	3.31	neutral
hierarchical / collectivist / paternal	hierarchical	3.25	neutral
traditional / tied to the past / resistant to change /old-fashioned	traditional	3.20	neutral
lax, relaxed attitude to time-keeping	relaxed time	2.97	neutral
family oriented	family-oriented	2.89	positive
backward / poor	poor	2.80	negative
conformist / conservative / formal	formal / conservative	2.78	neutral
modern / modernising / cosmopolitan / technological / rural-city divide	modern	2.50	positive
fussy / complicated	fussy / complicated	2.47	negative
hospitable / welcoming / understanding of migration / helpful / generous / community-builders / accommodating / cooperative	welcoming	2.33	positive
pessimistic / fatalistic / resigned / sad / accepting of (negative) position / nostalgic	pessimistic	2.30	negative
pacific / non-confrontational / conflict-avoiding / problems resolved through dialogue / uncertainty avoidance / calm / problem-avoidance	pacific	2.13	positive
dishonest / corrupt / exploitative / disrespectful of law	dishonest	1.93	negative
hard-working / competent / productive / businesslike	hard-working	1.91	positive
unsafe / dangerous drivers / not careful	dangerous	1.85	negative
time-wasters / unpunctual / unreliable	unpunctual	1.85	negative
gender inequality / male-oriented	sexist	1.77	negative
unsophisticated / child-like	unsophisticated	1.71	negative
flexible / non rule-bound / adaptable / not system-bound	flexible	1.46	positive
honest / down to earth /fair / sincere / honourable	honest	1.43	positive

gender equality / non-racist	equal opportunity	1.37	positive
fashion-conscious / image-conscious	image-conscious	1.32	neutral
proud	proud	1.29	positive
law-abiding / safe	law-abiding	1.26	positive
polite	polite	1.18	positive
complacent / buck-passers / bureaucratic	bureaucratic	1.18	negative
unimportant / obscure	unimportant	1.15	negative
self-critical / self-effacing / modest / humble / sense of humour	modest	1.09	neutral
Adjectives which, individually, account for less than 1% of all adjectival concepts found ▼			
rural / sea-faring	rural	0.90	neutral
nationalistic / anti-globalists	nationalistic	0.87	neutral
private / reserved	reserved	0.81	neutral
tactile	tactile	0.76	neutral
sports oriented	sports oriented	0.70	positive
regional differences / generational differences / local	differences	0.70	neutral
independent / individualistic	independent	0.67	neutral
tough / excellent negotiators	tough	0.56	neutral
selfish / uncaring (of elderly)	selfish	0.53	negative
religious	religious	0.48	neutral
interculturally incompetent / insular / poor language skills	poor communicators	0.45	negative
imaginative / creative	creative	0.42	positive
tolerant of others / sensitive	tolerant	0.36	positive
rule bound / not self-reliant / ritualistic	rule-bound	0.36	negative
Latinate	Latinate	0.36	neutral
romantic / attractive language	attractive linguistically	0.34	positive
unpredictable political affiliations	political	0.31	neutral
surprising	surprising	0.31	neutral
short-sighted	short-sighted	0.31	negative
rude	rude	0.31	negative

not nationalistic	not nationalistic	0.31	neutral
socially divided / snobbish	socially divided	0.28	negative
literate / cultured	cultured	0.28	positive
comfortable	comfortable	0.28	positive
authoritarian / over-protective	authoritarian	0.25	negative
unclean / dirty	unclean	0.22	negative
uneducated	uneducated	0.14	negative
racist	racist	0.14	negative
punctual	punctual	0.14	positive
gentle / humane	gentle	0.14	positive
direct	direct	0.14	neutral
cheap	cheap	0.14	neutral
thorough / detail-oriented	thorough	0.11	neutral
stereotyped	stereotyped	0.11	neutral
likeable	likeable	0.11	positive
expensive	expensive	0.08	negative
clean	clean	0.08	positive
quick learners	quick learners	0.06	positive
inconsiderate / noisy	inconsiderate	0.06	negative
stable	stable	0.03	positive
face-saving	face-saving	0.03	neutral

The classification of these adjectives as positive, negative or neutral is according to the way in which they relate to the text extracts, and not according to some generic or dictionary understanding of their meaning. Many of the adjectives were used directly by the authors. Where the concept has been referred to negatively or positively or without attitude in the large majority of extracts, the relevant attitudinal classification has been applied. In the case that there is a roughly equal balance between positive and negative attitudes, a neutral classification has been assigned.

Appendix 7 contains a graphic representation of all of these groups of adjectives as well as a graph representing the concepts from the initial concept list which account for a total of 60% of all concept occurrences, that is the most frequent concept occurrences. Figure 10 shows the grouped adjectivally expressed concepts for those adjectives that

account more for 1% or more of the total number of concepts found. All those adjectivally expressed concepts which were relatively infrequent and which, even when grouped, accounted for less than 1% of the total number (see Table 15) have been excluded from further analysis.

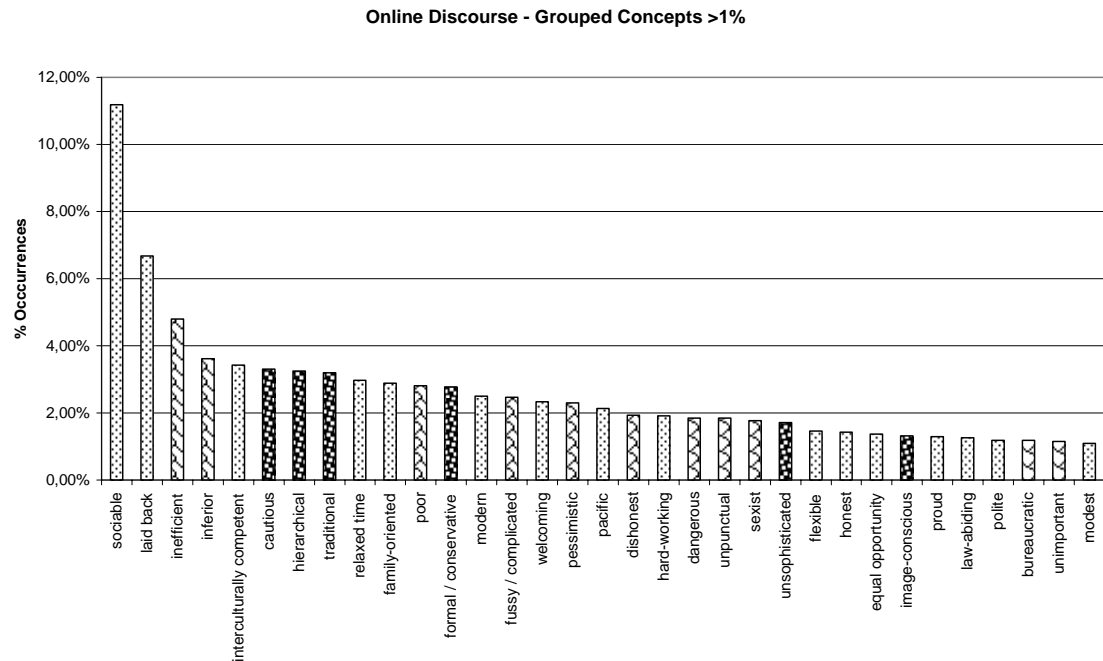


Figure 10 – Online Discourse Grouped Adjectival Concepts > 1% of Total

In order to facilitate the perception of these concepts Figure 11, Figure 12 and Figure 13 show the grouped concepts which, together, account for 90% of all concept occurrences according to the attitude expressed by the author. For clarity, the least frequent 10% of adjectival concepts have been excluded from these graphic representations.

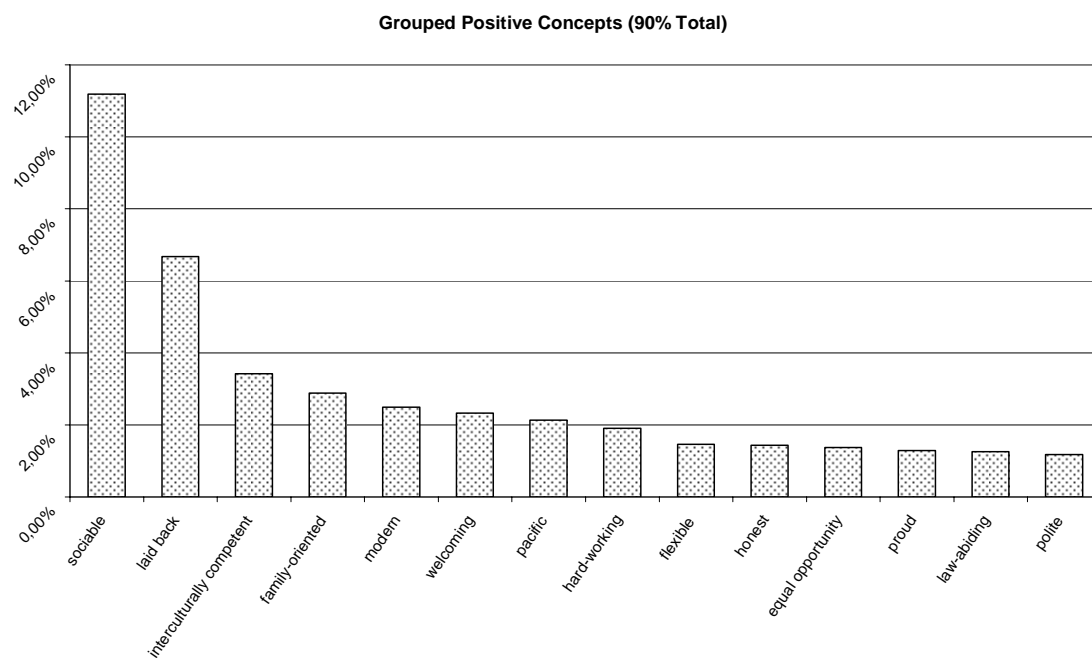


Figure 11 – Adjectival Concepts (90% of total) – Positive Attitude

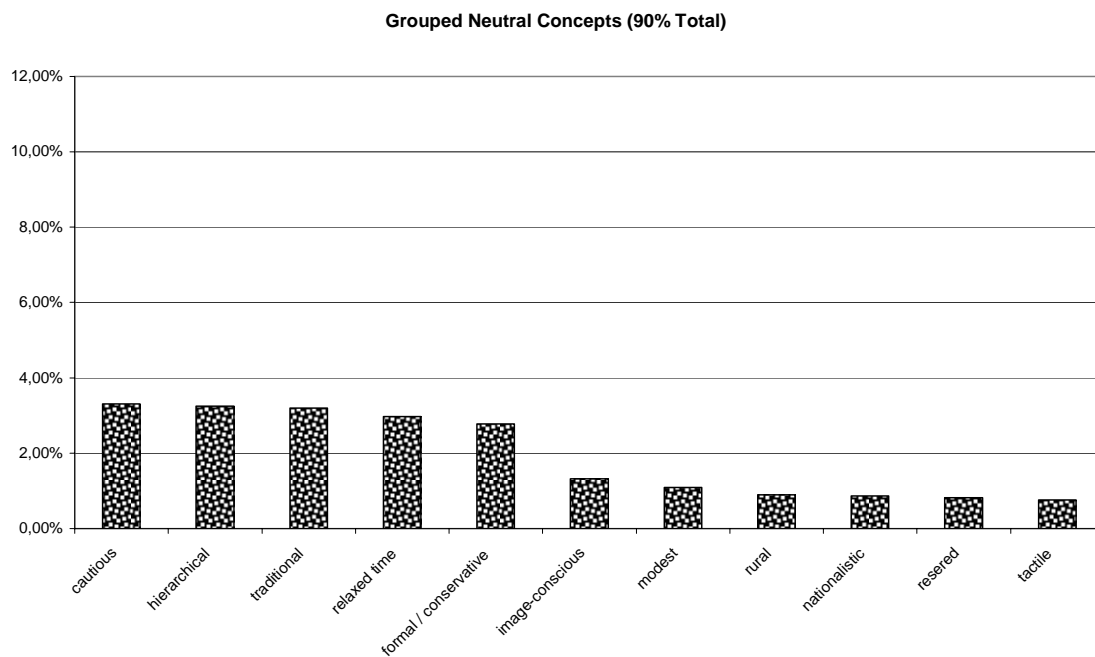


Figure 12 - Adjectival Concepts (90% of total) – Neutral Attitude

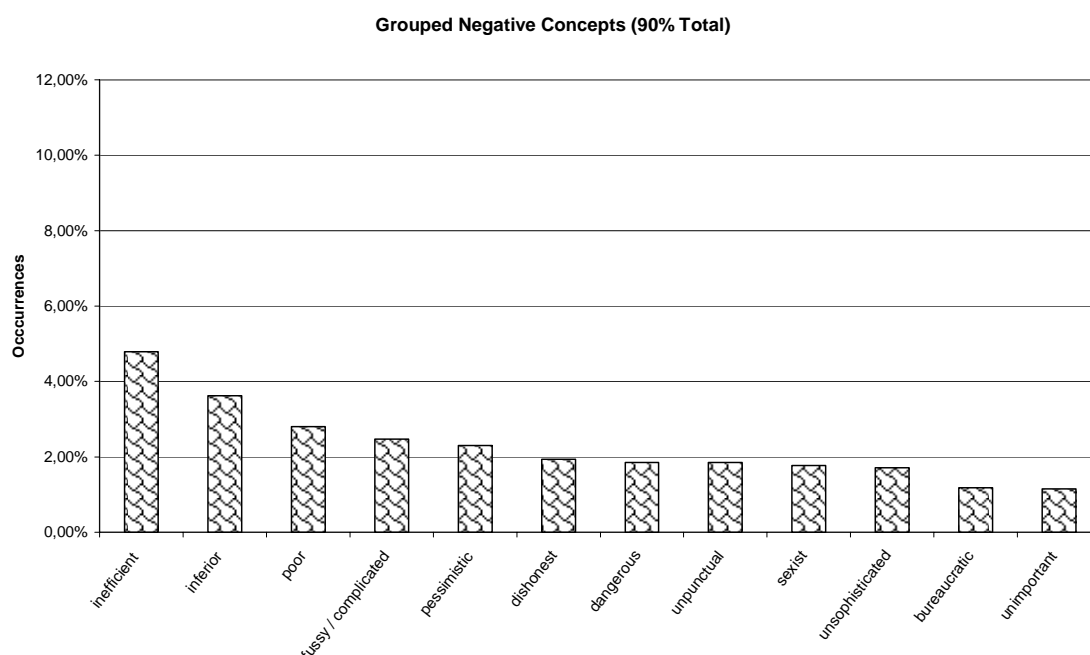


Figure 13 - Adjectival Concepts (90% of total) – Negative Attitude

4.1.5 Author Identity in Online Texts

As far as author identity, or level of anonymity, is concerned, the web pages were analysed for the identity features which are summarised in Table 16. These features show that there are some identifiable elements of identity, particularly as regards language orientation though this feature was decided subjectively by the researcher. Names tend to be given only on those web pages belonging to personal sites, news channels, academic papers, forums or blogs. Where it was possible to identify the author as ‘Portuguese’ this refers to nationality. In most cases this was designated to be other than Portuguese on the basis of the names given. In a few cases the text content itself leads to an understanding that the author is not Portuguese. ‘Located in Portugal’ refers to specific reference to either living in Portugal or being in Portugal at the time of a particular incident to which the text refers. Date refers to whether or not the web page is specifically dated with reference to the date of text production, rather than the web site as a whole. In a similar way to names, dates tended to appear on news articles, forum and blog postings and academic papers only. Dates, when given, were mostly precise though a small number referred to only the year or month of publication.

Identity-Related Feature	Yes	No	Unknown
Name	36	---	56
Portuguese	3	49	40

Located in Portugal	32	18	42
Native English Speaker	54	14	24
Date	39	---	53

Table 16 – Identity Features in Online Web Pages

4.2 Student Survey Questionnaire

98 students in the third and fourth years of the languages and business skills course completed the questionnaires. The results from the five parts of the questionnaire are given below

4.2.1 Part 1 – Contact with Foreigners

90 of the 98 students affirmed that they had had direct contact with English-speaking foreigners either in Portugal or when abroad. 5 students had had no contact and 3 left this part blank.

4.2.2 Part 2 – Topics Relating to Portugal

Of the 98 participants, 16 filled in every topic in this part. This led to the suspicion that these students had not fully understood the selective nature of the task and their answers were excluded from the overall results. 7 students left this part blank giving a total response population of 75. Four topics were added by respondents: ‘Tourism’, ‘Understanding Foreigners’, ‘Country Beauty’ and ‘Climate’. The responses and the attitudes expressed are summarised in percentage terms in Table 17

Topic	Mentioned as			Total for Topic
	positive	neutral	negative	
Hospitality	5.80%	0.00%	0.10%	5.90%
Food	5.61%	0.19%	0.00%	5.80%
Tradition	4.00%	0.86%	0.00%	4.85%
Driving	0.19%	0.48%	4.09%	4.76%
Lifestyle	2.66%	1.52%	0.48%	4.66%
Welcome	4.47%	0.10%	0.00%	4.57%
Language	0.95%	1.90%	1.52%	4.38%
Sport	3.52%	0.48%	0.19%	4.19%
History	3.33%	0.76%	0.00%	4.09%
Europe	0.48%	1.81%	1.62%	3.90%

Economy	0.00%	0.67%	3.14%	3.81%
Education	0.57%	1.62%	1.43%	3.62%
Lev. Of Dev.	0.19%	1.43%	1.90%	3.52%
Family	3.04%	0.29%	0.10%	3.43%
Religion	1.05%	1.62%	0.48%	3.14%
Bureaucracy	0.00%	0.19%	2.76%	2.95%
Racism	0.38%	1.24%	1.05%	2.66%
Corruption	0.10%	0.57%	1.90%	2.57%
Politics	0.00%	0.38%	2.00%	2.38%
Health	0.10%	1.14%	1.14%	2.38%
Technology	0.29%	1.05%	0.86%	2.19%
Women	0.38%	0.95%	0.67%	2.00%
Type of Workers	0.38%	1.05%	0.57%	2.00%
Trust	1.33%	0.48%	0.19%	2.00%
Efficiency	0.10%	1.05%	0.86%	2.00%
Honesty	0.86%	0.95%	0.10%	1.90%
Creativity	1.14%	0.67%	0.10%	1.90%
Immigration	0.76%	0.86%	0.10%	1.71%
Time-keeping	0.10%	0.38%	1.14%	1.62%
Productivity	0.38%	0.48%	0.76%	1.62%
Reliability	0.57%	0.67%	0.19%	1.43%
Negotiating Style	0.10%	1.05%	0.29%	1.43%
Tourism	0.38%	0.00%	0.00%	0.38%
Understanding Foreigners	0.00%	0.10%	0.00%	0.10%
Country Beauty	0.10%	0.00%	0.00%	0.10%
Climate	0.10%	0.00%	0.00%	0.10%
Totals	43.39%	26.93%	29.69%	100.00%

Table 17 – Questionnaire Part 2 (Topics) Responses

Figure 14 shows the first 20 of these topics in a graphical form. An enlarged version of this graph and a graph of all the topics mentioned can be found in Appendix 7.

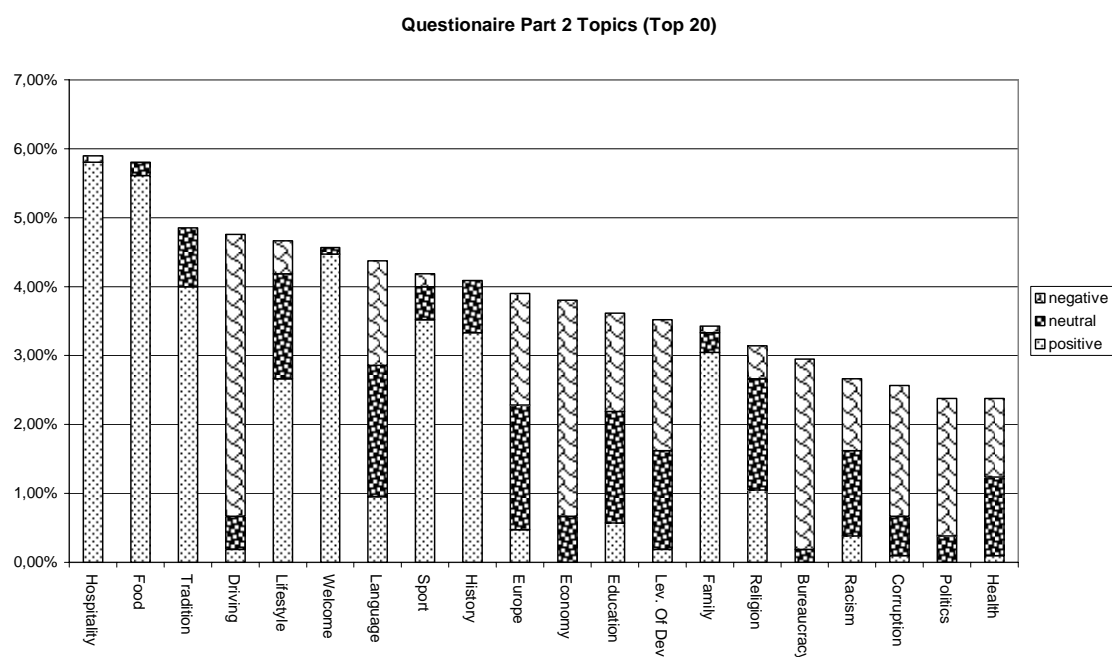


Figure 14 – Student Survey Questionnaire Part 2 (Topics) – Top 20 Results

4.2.3 Part 3 – Refined Topic Selection

In this part of the questionnaire the participants were asked to select 5 of the topics from the previous part, including any topics that had been added by participants. 13 respondents gave no answers to this part and one respondent gave six topics instead of 5. The results are summarised in percentage terms in Table 18

Topic	positive	neutral	negative	Total for Topic
Food	14.45%	0.00%	0.70%	15.15%
Hospitality	12.59%	0.00%	0.00%	12.59%
Sport	10.02%	0.00%	0.23%	10.26%
Driving	0.00%	0.00%	7.46%	7.46%
History	6.29%	0.00%	0.23%	6.53%
Economy	0.23%	0.23%	5.36%	5.83%
Level Of Development	0.23%	0.93%	4.20%	5.36%
Tradition	4.43%	0.00%	0.23%	4.66%
Language	1.86%	1.17%	1.40%	4.43%
Welcome	4.20%	0.00%	0.00%	4.20%

Bureaucracy	0.00%	0.00%	3.03%	3.03%
Europe	0.47%	0.23%	1.86%	2.56%
Lifestyle	1.40%	0.00%	0.70%	2.10%
Religion	1.17%	0.23%	0.47%	1.86%
Corruption	0.00%	0.00%	1.40%	1.40%
Politics	0.00%	0.00%	1.40%	1.40%
Health	0.00%	0.00%	1.17%	1.17%
Immigration	0.23%	0.23%	0.70%	1.17%
Family	0.93%	0.00%	0.00%	0.93%
Negotiating Style	0.47%	0.23%	0.23%	0.93%
Technology	0.00%	0.00%	0.93%	0.93%
Education	0.00%	0.23%	0.47%	0.70%
Productivity	0.00%	0.00%	0.70%	0.70%
Racism	0.23%	0.00%	0.47%	0.70%
Time-keeping	0.00%	0.00%	0.70%	0.70%
Creativity	0.47%	0.00%	0.00%	0.47%
Efficiency	0.23%	0.00%	0.23%	0.47%
Trust	0.47%	0.00%	0.00%	0.47%
Women	0.00%	0.00%	0.47%	0.47%
Climate	0.23%	0.00%	0.00%	0.23%
Country Beauty	0.00%	0.00%	0.23%	0.23%
Honesty	0.23%	0.00%	0.00%	0.23%
Reliability	0.00%	0.00%	0.23%	0.23%
Tourism	0.23%	0.00%	0.00%	0.23%
Type of Workers	0.23%	0.00%	0.00%	0.23%
Totals	61.31%	3.50%	35.20%	100.00%

Table 18 – Questionnaire Part 3 (Topic Selection) Responses

The full results are presented graphically in Appendix 7. Figure 15 shows the top 20 responses graphically.

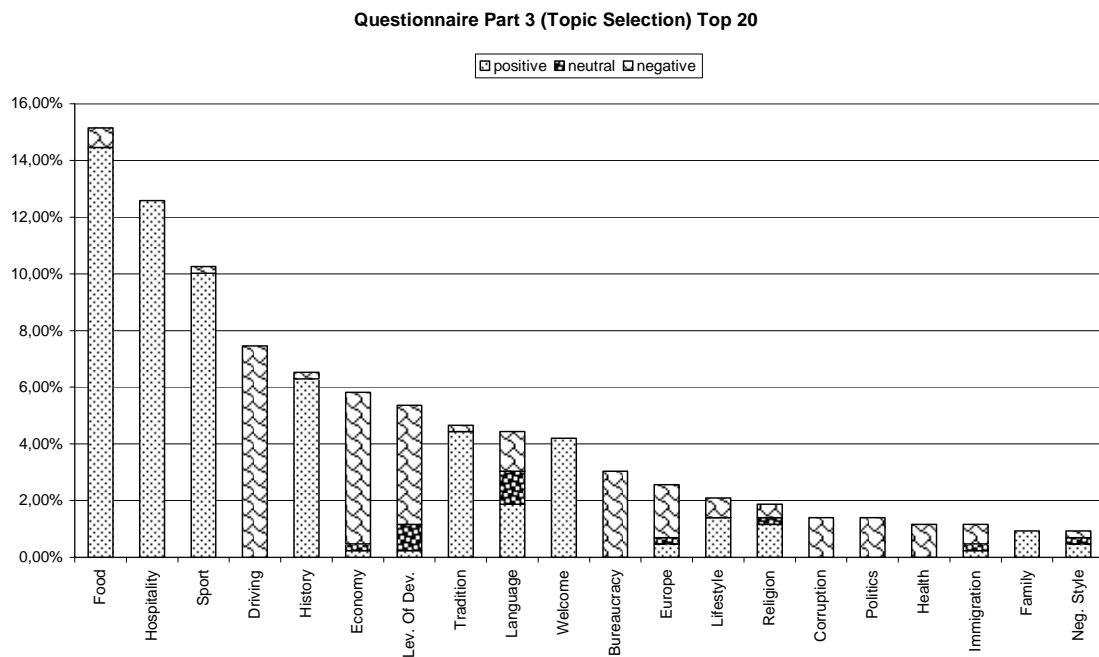


Figure 15 – Student Survey Questionnaire Part 3 (Topic Selection) Top 20

A comparison was also made of the attitudinal factor expressed by the respondents in parts 2 and 3 of the questionnaire. In the third part, in which respondents selected topics, the neutral attitude almost disappears and the vast majority of responses show positive or negative attitude. These differences are expressed in Figure 16 which shows the results for Part 3 by attitude and in Figure 17 which compares parts 2 and 3 by attitude.

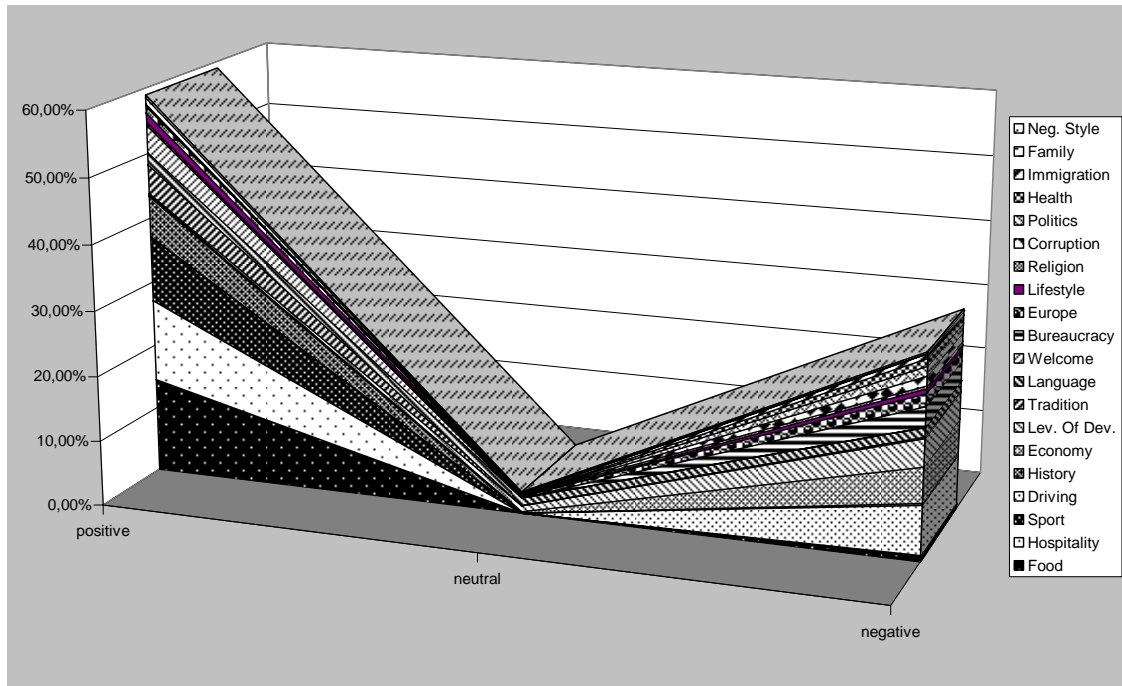


Figure 16 – Student Survey Questionnaire Part 3 (Topics) by Attitude

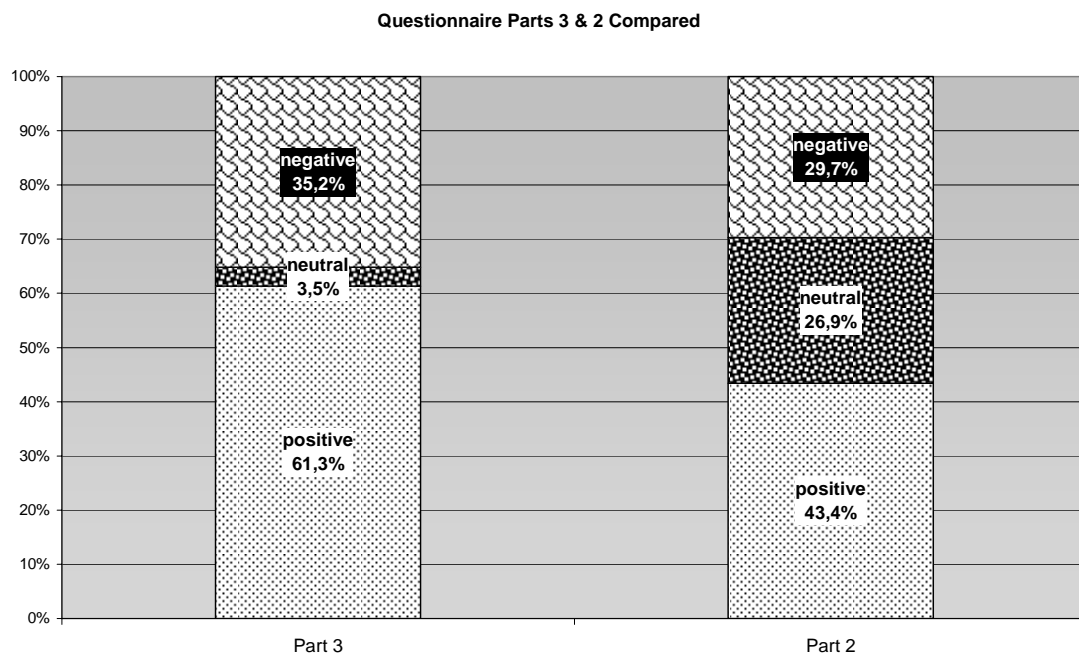


Figure 17 – Student Survey Questionnaire Parts 3 & 2 (Topics) by Attitude

The overall topic priorities also changed between parts 2 and 3. Table 19 shows how the top 20 topics in Part two, that is topics marked from a list for their applicability and attitudinal value, change in perspective when they become the object of focussed selection in a list of the five most important topics. Figure 18 shows the same

information in a graphic form.

Topic	Part 2	Part 3	Difference
Food	5.80%	15.15%	161.03%
Sport	4.19%	10.26%	145.07%
Hospitality	5.90%	12.59%	113.38%
History	4.09%	6.53%	59.61%
Driving	4.76%	7.46%	56.81%
Economy	3.81%	5.83%	53.18%
Level Of Development	3.52%	5.36%	52.25%
Bureaucracy	2.95%	3.03%	2.73%
Language	4.38%	4.43%	1.22%
▲ Increase in Importance in Part 3 ▲			
▼ Decrease in Importance in Part 3 ▼			
Tradition	4.85%	4.66%	-3.97%
Welcome	4.57%	4.20%	-8.04%
Europe	3.90%	2.56%	-34.38%
Religion	3.14%	1.86%	-40.76%
Politics	2.38%	1.40%	-41.14%
Corruption	2.57%	1.40%	-45.50%
Health	2.38%	1.17%	-50.81%
Lifestyle	4.66%	2.10%	-54.96%
Family	3.43%	0.93%	-72.85%
Racism	2.66%	0.70%	-73.73%
Education	3.62%	0.70%	-80.64%

Table 19 – Student Survey Questionnaire Parts 2 & 3 Compared

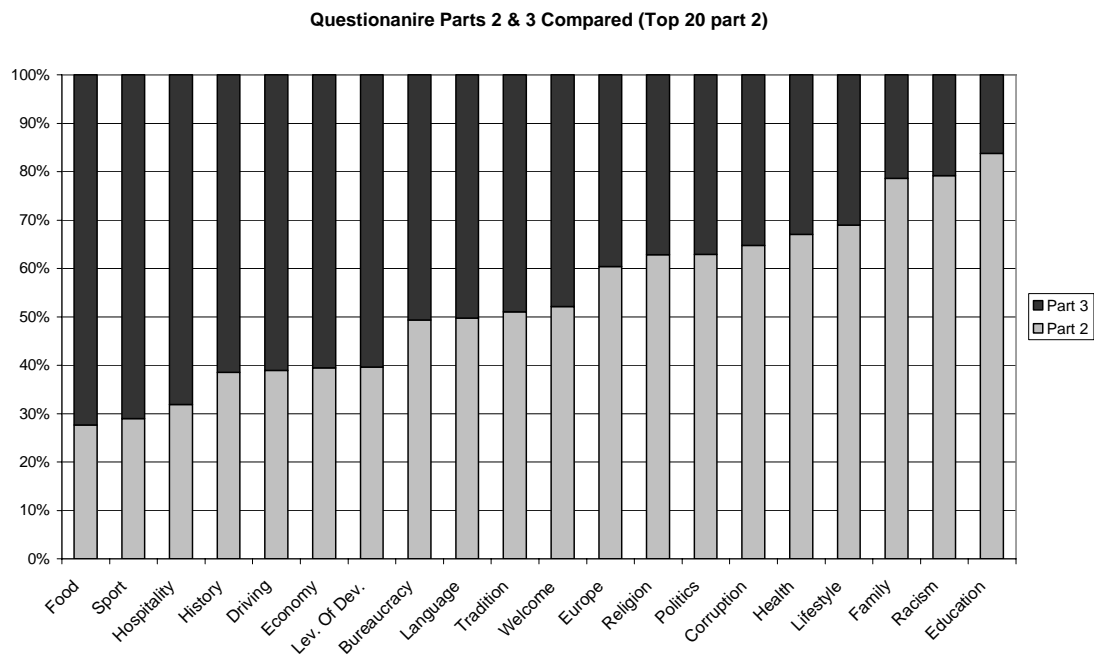


Figure 18 – Student Survey Questionnaire Parts 2 & 3 Topic Weighting

4.2.4 Part 4 – Concept Oriented Topic Selection

In this part of the questionnaire the respondents were asked to select as many adjectives as they felt were applicable to the Portuguese and Portugal. No limit or guide was given as to how many adjectives should be selected. The adjectives themselves were randomly distributed in this part of the questionnaire but there was the following underlying balance of generally understood connotational value of the group as shown in Table 20.

Positive Connotation (21)	Neutral Connotation (4)	Negative Connotation (17)
inventive sociable welcoming reliable cheerful considerate non-sexist flexible quality-oriented poetic fun-loving	keen Europeans family-oriented technology-oriented hierarchical	lazy complaining arrogant dangerous disorganised negative bureaucratic male-oriented outdated unpunctual corrupt

creative productive trustworthy hospitable hard-working tolerant respectful of others self-motivated sunny honest		pessimistic inefficient self-centred poor poorly educated sexist
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Table 20 – Student Survey Questionnaire Part 4 – Adjectival Affect Distribution

This distribution of adjectives, selected, as explained in the methodology section above, from a slightly larger group of adjectives prepared by a separate group of students (see 3.5.1) shows a correlation of 0.9711 with the distribution of topics selected by the participants in Part 3 of the survey in terms of connotational value of the data. To a certain extent, then, the two sets of data choice tend to confirm each other in terms of validity. All 98 of the respondents selected some adjectives, with the number of adjectives selected ranging from 4 to 21 with an average of 10.4. Table 21 shows the basic results for this part of the questionnaire in terms of the number of times each concept was chosen and the percentage of respondents who selected the concept as well as the relative weighting of the concept in terms of all the concepts selected. There were no concepts which were not chosen at all.

Concept	Times Selected	% Respondents who Selected	% of all Concepts Chosen
welcoming	93	94.90%	9.13%
hospitable	83	84.69%	8.15%
sociable	75	76.53%	7.36%
unpunctual	71	72.45%	6.97%
bureaucratic	50	51.02%	4.91%
family-oriented	50	51.02%	4.91%
lazy	49	50.00%	4.81%
poor	44	44.90%	4.32%
disorganised	42	42.86%	4.12%
pessimistic	34	34.69%	3.34%
complaining	31	31.63%	3.04%

male-oriented	27	27.55%	2.65%
fun-loving	26	26.53%	2.55%
honest	26	26.53%	2.55%
cheerful	24	24.49%	2.36%
hard-working	23	23.47%	2.26%
respectful of others	22	22.45%	2.16%
sunny	21	21.43%	2.06%
poorly educated	20	20.41%	1.96%
corrupt	19	19.39%	1.86%
creative	18	18.37%	1.77%
hierarchical	18	18.37%	1.77%
poetic	18	18.37%	1.77%
sexist	17	17.35%	1.67%
negative	15	15.31%	1.47%
tolerant	15	15.31%	1.47%
outdated	14	14.29%	1.37%
inefficient	13	13.27%	1.28%
trustworthy	12	12.24%	1.18%
flexible	9	9.18%	0.88%
reliable	7	7.14%	0.69%
keen Europeans	6	6.12%	0.59%
non-sexist	5	5.10%	0.49%
arrogant	4	4.08%	0.39%
inventive	4	4.08%	0.39%
productive	4	4.08%	0.39%
considerate	2	2.04%	0.20%
quality-oriented	2	2.04%	0.20%
self-motivated	2	2.04%	0.20%
technology-oriented	2	2.04%	0.20%
dangerous	1	1.02%	0.10%
self-centred	1	1.02%	0.10%

Table 21 – Student Survey Questionnaire Part 4 – Concept Selection

This data was used to run an internal validity check on the concepts and adjectives chosen for the questionnaire. Pairs of similar or synonymous adjectives should be correlated and pairs of opposite adjectives should show negative or very low correlation. Table 22 shows the result of this internal validity analysis. The result shows that similar pairs of concepts correlate very well (0.86). Opposite concept pairs show little correlation which enhances the validity of the question. From this it is possible to deduce that the respondents, as a group, have coherent but mixed opinions as to the concepts which can be applied to the target community, the Portuguese in general.

Similar Concept Pairs				
<i>Concept 1</i>	<i>Occurrence</i>	<i>Concept 2</i>	<i>Occurrence</i>	<i>Correlation</i>
pessimistic	34	complaining	31	0.860205
creative	18	inventive	4	
hospitable	83	welcoming	93	
tolerant	15	respectful of others	22	
trustworthy	12	reliable	7	
inefficient	13	disorganised	42	
cheerful	24	sunny	21	
male-oriented	27	sexist	17	
productive	4	hard-working	23	
lazy	49	unpunctual	71	
Opposite Concept Pairs				
lazy	49	hardworking	23	0.102893
self-centred	1	respectful of others	22	
non-sexist	5	male-oriented	27	
corrupt	19	trustworthy	12	
technology-oriented	2	outdated	14	
negative	15	cheerful	24	
pessimistic	34	sunny	21	

Table 22 – Student Survey Questionnaire Part 4 Internal Validity

Following the same methodological principles employed in the first part of this study, the concepts were reduced to a smaller number of groups of concepts which embraced one or more of these adjectivally expressed concepts. After grouping the concepts, their total number of occurrence was given a weighted score by dividing the total occurrences

by the number of concepts in each group. This was done in order to negate the effect of respondents selecting the same adjectival concepts for the same reasons. The resulting relationship between the concepts is shown in Table 23 and graphically in Figure 19. The following graph, Figure 20, shows the grouped concepts resulting from this part of the survey organised by affective value.

Grouped Concept	Total	Weighted	%
welcoming / hospitable	176	88.0	14.99%
lazy / unpunctual	120	60.0	10.22%
sociable / fun-loving	101	50.5	8.60%
bureaucratic	50	50	8.52%
family-oriented	50	50	8.52%
poor	44	44	7.50%
inefficient / disorganised	55	27.5	4.69%
negative / pessimistic / complaining	80	26.7	4.54%
cheerful / sunny	45	22.5	3.83%
male-oriented / sexist	44	22.0	3.75%
poorly educated	20	20	3.41%
corrupt	19	19	3.24%
hierarchical	18	18	3.07%
poetic	18	18	3.07%
outdated	14	14	2.39%
considerate / respectful of others / tolerant / flexible	48	12.0	2.04%
inventive / creative	22	11.0	1.87%
reliable / trustworthy	19	9.5	1.62%
productive / hard-working / quality-oriented / self-motivated	31	7.8	1.32%
keen Europeans	6	6	1.02%
non-sexist	5	5	0.85%
arrogant / self-centred	5	2.5	0.43%
technology-oriented	2	2	0.34%
dangerous	1	1	0.17%

Table 23 – Student Survey Questionnaire Part 4 Grouped Concepts

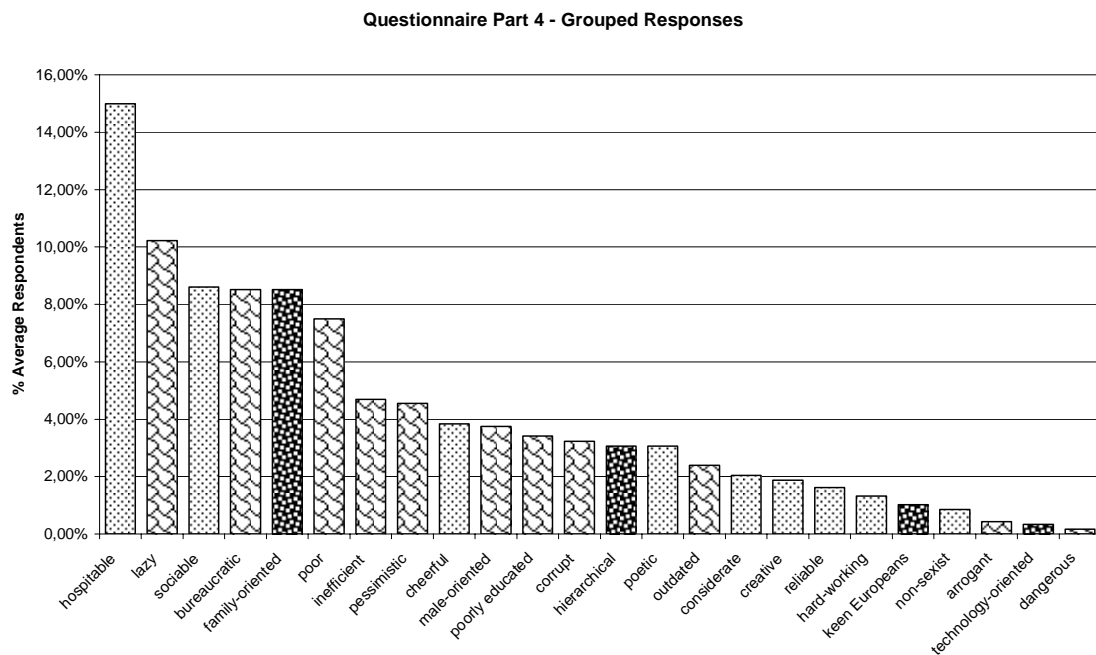


Figure 19 – Student Survey Questionnaire Part 4 – Grouped Responses

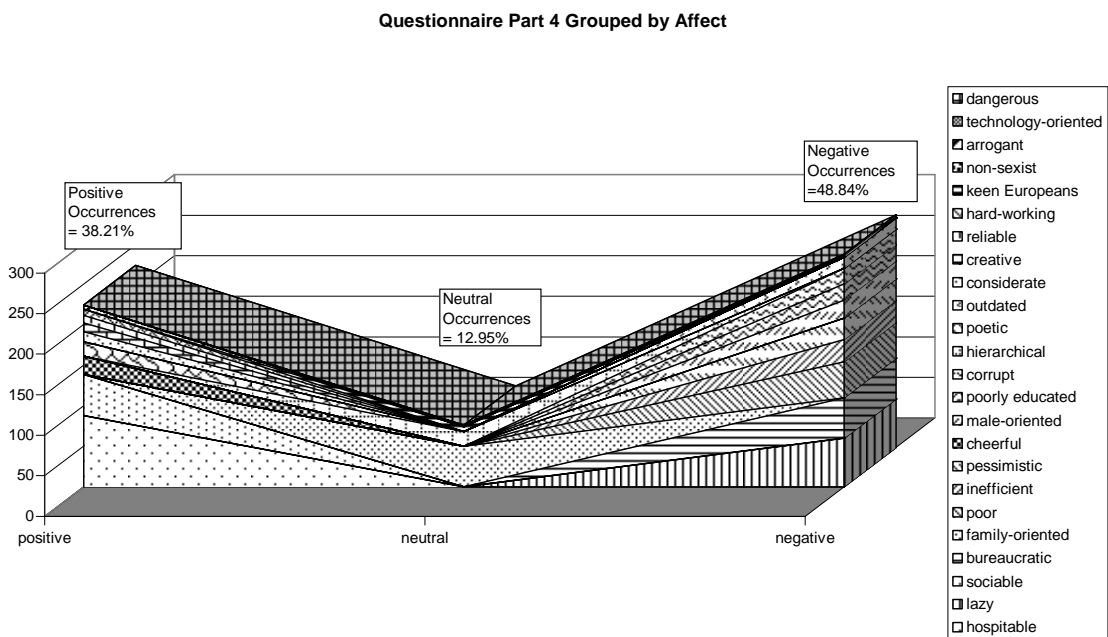


Figure 20 – Student Survey Questionnaire Part 4 - Grouped Concept by Affect

4.2.5 Part 5 – Open Question

This part asked respondents to reflect on the opinions that they feel foreign business people might have about the Portuguese business community. Of the 98 respondents 96

elected to reply to this part of the questionnaire and 2 left it blank. The responses were analysed for content in a similar way to the other parts of the questionnaire. The number of identifiable topics, opinions or concepts identified ranged from 1 to 7 with each respondent giving an average of 3.01 identifiable responses. The total responses are detailed in Table 24 which shows the concepts identified, the number of times each concept occurred, the percentage occurrence of each concept in relation to all the occurrences mentioned, the percentage of respondents that mentioned each concept and the affective value of the concept to the respondents. Some of these responses were grouped as the students' responses were being initially analysed. Table 25 shows the result of further re-appreciation of the texts and consequent concept grouping.

Identified Concept	Occur.	% of Concepts	% of Resp.	Affect
hospitable/welcoming/friendly/likeable people	41	13.90%	42.71%	positive
unpunctual	29	9.83%	30.21%	negative
disorganised / inefficient	17	5.76%	17.71%	negative
lazy	16	5.42%	16.67%	negative
don't know it exists / don't know much / part of Spain / low profile	14	4.75%	14.58%	negative
principally just a holiday destination	14	4.75%	14.58%	negative
bureaucratic	10	3.39%	10.42%	negative
beautiful / attractive / pleasant country	10	3.39%	10.42%	positive
underdeveloped / undeveloped	9	3.05%	9.38%	negative
pessimistic	8	2.71%	8.33%	negative
poor country / poor economy	8	2.71%	8.33%	negative
trustworthy / honest / reliable	7	2.37%	7.29%	positive
good food	7	2.37%	7.29%	positive
don't take business seriously / not taken seriously in business / difficult to do business with	6	2.03%	6.25%	negative
living in the past / backward	6	2.03%	6.25%	negative
bad place to invest / do business	5	1.69%	5.21%	negative
low productivity	5	1.69%	5.21%	negative
hard-working	5	1.69%	5.21%	positive
strong historical tradition	5	1.69%	5.21%	positive

easily influenced / persuaded / controlled	3	1.02%	3.13%	negative
economic difficulties	3	1.02%	3.13%	negative
male oriented	3	1.02%	3.13%	negative
not to be taken seriously	3	1.02%	3.13%	negative
poor education	3	1.02%	3.13%	negative
small (in all senses)	3	1.02%	3.13%	negative
source of overly cheap labour	3	1.02%	3.13%	negative
good place to invest / do business	3	1.02%	3.13%	positive
serious business people / businesslike / good to do business with	3	1.02%	3.13%	positive
lacking in skills / wrong type of workers / poor workers	2	0.68%	2.08%	negative
last minuters	2	0.68%	2.08%	negative
rude	2	0.68%	2.08%	negative
sad people	2	0.68%	2.08%	negative
superficial in work / not quality-oriented	2	0.68%	2.08%	negative
untrustworthy / low credibility / unreliable	2	0.68%	2.08%	negative
agricultural / rural	2	0.68%	2.08%	neutral
investment is tourist oriented	2	0.68%	2.08%	neutral
collaborative	2	0.68%	2.08%	positive
creative	2	0.68%	2.08%	positive
developing well / steadily	2	0.68%	2.08%	positive
informal / laid back in business situations	2	0.68%	2.08%	positive
peaceful	2	0.68%	2.08%	positive
reasonable to negotiate with / not too demanding	2	0.68%	2.08%	positive
at the bottom of the European table	1	0.34%	1.04%	negative
bad drivers	1	0.34%	1.04%	negative
calculating	1	0.34%	1.04%	negative
corrupt	1	0.34%	1.04%	negative
generally negative	1	0.34%	1.04%	negative

indecisive	1	0.34%	1.04%	negative
looked down upon	1	0.34%	1.04%	negative
base negotiation on trust	1	0.34%	1.04%	neutral
cheap place to live / invest	1	0.34%	1.04%	neutral
family-oriented	1	0.34%	1.04%	neutral
image-conscious	1	0.34%	1.04%	neutral
status conscious	1	0.34%	1.04%	neutral
generally positive	1	0.34%	1.04%	positive
good climate	1	0.34%	1.04%	positive
hard-working abroad	1	0.34%	1.04%	positive
like to build relationships in business	1	0.34%	1.04%	positive
well organised	1	0.34%	1.04%	positive
like the good things in life / prioritised lifestyle / work-life balance	1	0.34%	1.04%	positive

Table 24 – Student Survey Questionnaire Part 5 (Open) All Responses

Grouped Concept	Occurrence (Hits)	Occurrence %
hospitable	41	13.90%
low profile (for business)	32	10.85%
unpunctual	29	9.83%
lazy	21	7.12%
disorganised	20	6.78%
undeveloped	18	6.10%
unbusinesslike	16	5.42%
physically attractive	13	4.41%
businesslike	13	4.41%
poor	11	3.73%
bureaucratic	10	3.39%
sad	10	3.39%
honest	8	2.71%
good food	7	2.37%
hard-working	6	2.03%

traditional	5	1.69%
poor training	5	1.69%
cheap	4	1.36%
malleable	3	1.02%
male-oriented	3	1.02%
untrustworthy	3	1.02%
rude	2	0.68%
tourism investment	2	0.68%
creative	2	0.68%
developing well	2	0.68%
status-conscious	2	0.68%
poor driving	1	0.34%
corrupt	1	0.34%
generally negative	1	0.34%
family-oriented	1	0.34%
generally positive	1	0.34%
well organised	1	0.34%
lifestyle	1	0.34%

Table 25 – Student Survey Questionnaire Part 5 – Grouped Concepts

This information is represented graphically in the two graphs below. Figure 21 shows the relative importance given to each of the concept groups and Figure 22 shows the concept groups with their relative affective dimension.

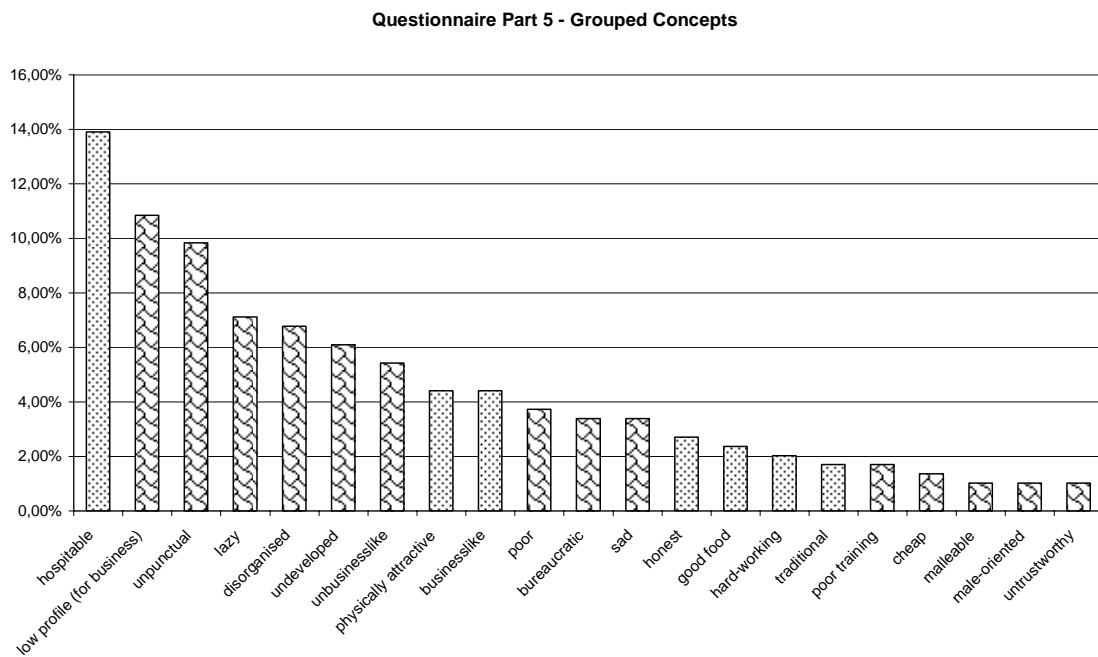


Figure 21 – Student Survey Questionnaire Part 5 – Grouped Concepts

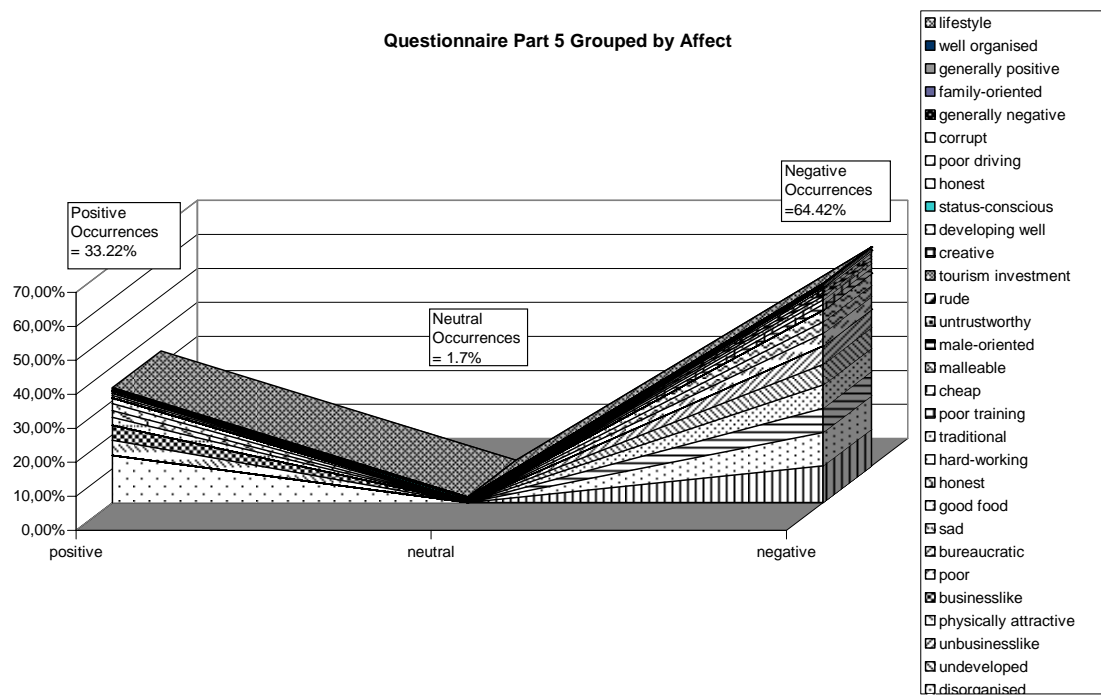


Figure 22 – Student Survey Questionnaire Part 5 - Grouped by Affect

5 Discussion of Results

In this section of the dissertation the results of the empirical part of this study will be discussed in relation to the research questions posed in the introduction. The results of the discourse analysis of online texts will be looked at in their own right and in comparison to the results from the student survey questionnaire. The comparison of these two sets of results should allow most of the research questions to be addressed.

5.1 Online Discourse Analysis Results

5.1.1 *Information Search Results*

The first notable point about the information search procedure is that the employment of a relatively high number of search strings (21) resulted in a relatively low number of relevant web sites (58), that is 2.76 relevant sites per search. Bearing in mind that, in most cases, the examination of search results was restricted to the first page, it is argued that there are potentially many more English language sites containing information on the Portuguese business community. The total number of hits returned by all searches was over 150,000. However, there is almost certainly a great deal of repetition of sites both within and between search results. Moreover, given the tendency of information-seekers not to look beyond the first page of results, or to stop at the first acceptable result, it can be argued that other, later, results are irrelevant to the overall picture of how the target community is represented on the web.

Additionally, the 21 different search strings returned repeated results, in terms of web pages, a relatively high number of times and many of these most frequently returned pages, such as www.executiveplanet.com, contained extensive information resources on the target community. This search pattern was reinforced by the fact that the last four search strings revealed no new results to add to those already logged.

Given that this is the case, and assuming that the search strings were suitably typical, then the representations are constructed over a relatively small total discourse base, despite the fact that the number of web pages (92) was almost double the number of web sites. The online discourse total size as a text corpus is only just over 98,000 words. This indicates that the study may be considered reasonably exhaustive, or at least solidly representative, in terms of covering the total available discourse on the Portuguese community's cultural behaviours in this medium.

The web search for information on Portugal was based on a trial search carried out in relation to Austria. As shown above, the two searches were similar in terms of quantity of results. There was also a level of similarity in terms of search result type, expressed

as site genre, as shown in Table 26. The text genre was not separately analysed in the trial study so the equivalences are approximate, but the two genre lists show a reasonable correlation of 0.59. There is one genre category, that of Government /NGO Country Commercial Guide which is significantly differently represented in the results of the two searches. The correlation without this genre category would be 0.82. As a result, although it is not possible to assume the searches are strictly equivalent, it is possible to claim that they are similar and, but for one category, would be highly equivalent. This has been taken to be sufficient validation of the search procedure in that it has returned broadly similar results for two unconnected variables.

Web Site Genre	Austria	Portugal
EU Report - Industrial Relations	0.72%	1.09%
Human Rights Report	1.45%	3.26%
Online News Article / Magazine	2.17%	6.52%
B2B Report / Profile	6.52%	4.35%
Academic Paper	3.62%	3.26%
Forum / Blog / Travelogue	9.42%	7.61%
Government Department / NGO General Country Guide	5.80%	13.04%
General Culture Guide	6.52%	3.26%
Newsletter / Newspaper	7.97%	6.52%
Personal / Club Home Page	7.97%	13.04%
Business Culture Guide	14.51%	19.57%
General Travel Guide	15.21%	11.96%
Government Department Country Commercial Guide + General Country Guide	18.12%	3.26%
Meeting Minutes	0.00%	1.09%
Specialist Activity Guide	0.00%	2.17%

Table 26 – Web Site Genre Comparison: Austria & Portugal Searches

The intention of the online discourse study was to focus on the representations of the behaviours of the Portuguese business community. The business community does not exist simply as a business community, as all members will also be members of other cultural groupings and sub-groupings, and authors writing about their opinions or experiences of the target community can be expected to include commentary on their whole experience, the whole Portuguese community, the country in general and other cultural groupings.

In terms of the genre classification of the web sites in the Portugal information search (see Table 9 and Table 11), 42.4% of the sites are specifically business oriented, a further 15.22% of sites are general travel, culture or country guides and 20.65% of the sites are news or personal narrative relating to the country as a whole. In a qualitative sense, this has been assumed to be a balanced focus.

A further indicator that the study is focussed on the business community is provided by a brief study of the word frequency of the words found in a corpus consisting of all the texts looked at in the search process as summarised in Table 27.

Word	% Study Frequency (in all texts)	% Frequency Brown Corpus
business	0.299	0.0387
commercial	0.12	0.006
work	0.158	0.075
visit	0.038	0.0107
industry	0.024	0.0168
company	0.028	0.028

Table 27 – Portugal Search Word Frequency

A collocation table of the word ‘business’ in the whole text corpus gives the results shown in for the 40 most common first position right-side collocates.

Collocate	Frequency	Collocate	Frequency
Etiquette	59	Meeting	2
trip	14	partner	2
cards	6	RELATED	2
culture	6	suits	2
meetings	6	transactions	2
hours	5	travelers	2
circles	4	ventures	2
community	4	women	2
people	3	discussion	1
situation	3	Business	1
colleagues	3	health	1
situations	3	men	1

Profile	2	relationship	1
Appointments	2	WORLD	1
Businesspeople	2	activity	1
contact	2	associates	1
contacts	2	associations	1
conversation	2	center	1
dress	2	Coeducation	1
lunch	2	colleague	1

Table 28 – Collocates for ‘business’ in Online Discourse Corpus

Taken together these factors would seem to affirm that the study has managed to focus on a suitable and representative body of discourse that has been produced by and for the specific discourse community in question.

5.1.2 Discourse Features and Authors

The analysis of the text extracts by discourse feature (see Table 5, Table 10, Table 11, Figure 3, Figure 4 and Appendix 9) helped achieve the objectives of this study in a number of ways. Firstly, it provided the researcher with a useful tool for the process of reading and re-reading the text extracts in that it provided another focus to aid reading and ensure that each text extract was looked at from more than one perspective. This, in turn, helped with the extraction of topics and concepts as well as the classification of attitude embedded in the text.

Secondly, it enabled some features of the author’s presence and motivations in the text to become a little clearer since, in the broadest possible terms, opinion discourse was equated with the generalisation of belief whereas perception discourse was equated with the generalisation or reporting of experience.

5.1.2.1 The Role of Attitudinal Discourse in the Study

Thirdly, the discourse features themselves changed their roles as analytical tools within the study as the reading and re-reading progressed. Shi-Xu’s (1997) study had found that attitudinal discourse features were present in most discourse on the cultural other. The same proved to be true in this study in that very few of the extracts showed combinations of opinion, perception or attributional discourse features but most extracts showed one of these three discourse features plus attitudinal discourse features. Initially, classifying text as showing one of the four discourse types involved treating all the types as being equal in terms of their use in the analytical stage of examining the results. This enabled comparisons to be made between the attitudinal orientations of the authors

as expressed in their use of attitudinal discourse features with the other types of discourse feature they employed and the genre within which they were writing. As the discourse features, particularly in the case of opinion and perception discourse, are closely correlated to author purpose and motivation, and genre is useful in determining some aspects of author identity, it became possible to further resolve the cultural representations held by the discourse community. That is, instead of only being able to refer to the community as a single whole, it was possible to define sub-groups of the discourse community, in a general way, based on these factors. This enabled the study to avoid the unresolved conclusion that the whole discourse community viewed the Portuguese business community in exactly the same way. As a result it is possible to draw some practical indications about the orientations of particular sub-groups towards the target community as well as outline possible reasons for these orientations. These indications could be tested in further, more sub-group focussed studies. The use of attitudinal discourse as a study measure also enabled the author's attitudes to be compared, in general, with those of the students. This is of practical use to the pedagogical outcome of the study in terms of preparation for intercultural encounters. It would be useful for students to have previous knowledge not just of the cultural representations of behaviour and social activity that their counterparts might have but also the attitudes that they might bring to the encounter based on their Internet research.

5.1.2.2 Attributional Discourse Results

Attributional discourse proved to be rare in all the texts examined. Only 4.32% of the texts showed attributional discourse features (see Figure 4). This may be for a number of reasons amongst which is the possibility that the author's motivations, or implied social function in the text, is to engender in the reader a sense of trust in the author as authority. This would result in little need for the author to explain how the cultural representations that the author communicates have come to be, or to contextualise any culturally-oriented observations outside the text itself. The lack of attributional, or explanatory, discourse may be due to the author's need for the reader to accept the discourse as true, and in many cases as instructional, on the basis of the author's authority rather than any appeal to the reader's understanding of logical explanation. In some cases, the author may feel a need to explain an observation or opinion if there is some perceived weakness or embarrassment in it from the author's point of view. This may happen, for example, if the author feels uncomfortable about the observation as an over-generalisation.

The author, in opinion and perception discourse, wishes the reader to accept the author's unique view of the situation as the authoritative or preferred one. Explaining why the

representations are the way they are by referencing them to other cultural facts in the target community would remove the author as sole conduit for reaching understanding of the community's behaviour. Text069 for example contains the statement:

Portugal is a self-styled country comprised of generally reserved and understated people.

As no explanation is given for this, the reader must accept the author's authority that this is the way people are without knowing why. Additionally, the reader also finds it very difficult to reference this representation of the Portuguese to their own cultural context since, although the behaviour may be similar or different, there is no obvious contextual anchor of other cultural fact with which to make the comparison. Many of the texts refer to the Portuguese community's family-oriented lifestyle, though very few attempt to explain why or how this orientation works. An exception is the following attributional extract, from text040.

Kinship relations, whether based on biology or social relationships, were perhaps the least affected, for they remained vitally important in how Portuguese lived and worked with one another.

This extract explains why family is still so important in that family continues to act as a framework organisation not just for living but also for working. A more explicit attribution in the same text is:

To a degree that often surprised outsiders, even in the early 1990s many Portuguese marriages were arranged. For the peasant class, considerations of land were often most important in determining marriage candidates.

It is possible that the author thought that readers would find the concept of arranged marriages so outlandish that some more acceptable functional explanation was necessary.

Given the anonymity and the lack of direct contact and, hence, accountability between the author and readership parts of the discourse community, this low percentage of attributional discourse is not surprising. Authors may feel more protected by the medium and, consequently, more open and sure in their opinions and less inclined to justify through attributional mechanisms.

5.1.2.3 *Opinion Discourse Results*

Opinion discourse, the discourse in which the author takes opinions and turns them into cultural facts, is by far the most common discourse type in this discourse community. In

terms of genre, this hardly surprising since, as Table 11 shows, most of the ‘recognised authority’ genres (Government or NGO reports, the Media, academic publications and Business Reportage) contain high percentages of this type of discourse. As the representations are not based upon individual personal experience the reader is left to assume that they are carefully constructed facts resulting from scientific study, indisputable authority or long-term or high-volume collation of experience. In keeping with the depersonalised nature of the author’s presence, the layout and presentation of these web pages tends also to be austere and depersonalised. This study showed, however, that there are other genres in which opinion discourse is put to use by authors.

One of these is in the ‘forum’ genre. Ostensibly these are more informal discussion groups in which authors are free to employ whichever discourse feature fits the message or the forum community. Here the use of opinion discourse is apparently related to the presentation, to the readership, of unpleasant information through the device of distancing the author from the information by making it appear to be cultural fact. It could be argued that in the forum, where there is more investment of identity in a more identifiable or known community and there is also more possibility of being replied to, the author hides behind the greater objectivity and distancing of the opinion rather than perception style of discourse. An example of this is found in text092:

a curious blend of Latin temperament and Atlantic introspection. A forgotten corner of Europe where time has stood still for some time and only now is the land and the people awaking to the rest of Europe

or, even more obviously, from text039:

My friends say that the prices are very much higher in Portugal than Spain.

The same tendency is found in the one extract taken from text086, a blog. This is another very personal form of communication but in this, single, instance the author has seen fit to recourse to opinion discourse:

79 percent of the Portuguese are convinced that religion is a positive force in the world

5.1.2.4 *Perception Discourse Results*

Perception discourse is less clearly related than opinion discourse to specific online genres. This may be partly due to the overall lower quantity of perception discourse features in the online texts. Travelogues, specialist guides and meeting minutes are genres in which all the extracts showed perception discourse features. Forums, magazines and newspaper genres showed perception discourse features of over 50%,

and business culture guides and reports showed significant levels of perception discourse features.

There may be two main underlying factors at work here. The first, and more significant, is that in travelogues, specialist guides, meeting minutes and perhaps some magazine forms, the authors will probably have a much clearer idea as to who their readership is.

Additionally, author and reader may both belong to other cultural groupings, such as visitors to a particular destination or people who work for the same organisation. This has the effect of closing the distance between author and reader and enabling a much more personal and disclosed form of communication as trust levels will be higher. Authors can, therefore, invest more of themselves and more of their identity in a form of sub-discourse within the discourse community which has a more open, direct and mutually contextualised level of communication between author and reader. It is possible that this discourse style is either wholly accepted by the reader because of the author's other cultural credentials or is wholly rejected because the reader does not belong to the same, other, cultural groups as the author.

The second relevant factor here is that some of these genres have highly similar offline counterparts. Magazines, meeting minutes, newspapers and specialist guides exist in printed forms for restricted readerships and often at a price. Both of these characteristics combine to entail a much closer relationship between author and reader. This, however, is not a focus issue for the present study and the sample size of these genre types was insufficiently large to draw detailed conclusions as to exactly which features of the genres lead to the preponderance of perception discourse features in these text extracts.

5.1.2.5 Summary of Discourse Feature Analysis

One relevant point in this discussion is that, for both opinion and perception discourse features, there are mechanisms of communication between author and reader which rely on a characterisation of the relationship between these two members of the discourse community. The precise nature of this relationship leads the authors to employ differing mixes of discourse features.

The analysis of the online discourse in terms of genre and discourse feature has shown that cultural representations of the Portuguese business community are linguistically encoded in online text and has revealed some of the mechanisms that condition this encoding. The parameters of communication of those mental concepts between author and reader are dependent, to some degree, on the type of discourse that the author constructs. Other parameters are related to the fact that the reader's engagement with the online text is known to be procedurally, cognitively and socially different from that with

offline text. The initial analysis of these texts through genre and discourse feature has further defined some of these parameters of communication. The combination of discourse feature and genre allows the reader to make some identity assumptions, in an identity impoverished environment, possibly about the author's identity but certainly about the author's cultural status in relation to the discourse community. This, in turn, conditions the reader's interaction with the text.

It is not possible to predict the reading procedure and approach that might be undertaken by other readers so the study must rely on the interpretation of the reader-researcher. While reading the texts, the researcher came to feel that two sub-communities of the overall discourse community were being engaged with. The search strings used were oriented towards the world of business and commerce but the results that they gave were not entirely so. Some of the most useful information, either in terms of quantity or appropriacy did not come from specifically business or authority type sources. The British Foreign Office's travel advice (see web076) was not as engaging as text as the semi-commercial business cultural guide at executive planet (see web001 to web014). The official source, which was instructional and extremely detailed in nature, was useful but left the reader with little impression as to everyday life and behaviours in Portugal and so was only able to provide one part of what was being looked for.

A more descriptive account of the behaviours of the whole Portuguese community was to be found in the magazine articles, travelogues and some of the personal pages. The relevant weighting that an individual reader might give to any of these sources will depend to a large extent on the identification that the reader makes with the author initially through the page genre type but more specifically through the discourse features that the individual text shows. Some readers, feeling part of a sub-community and therefore closer to the author, may be more influenced by perceptual accounts based on first-hand experience. Others, who perhaps are more inclined to accept or are accustomed to working with the established authorities, may find the opinion discourse from such sources is more believable.

The overall impression, then, was that the representational picture is more accessible through online text than offline text since a single search enquiry leads to a multiplicity of sources that give a more complete and wide-ranging description of the target community. The nature of these representations is discussed in the following sub-sections.

5.1.3 Discourse Feature and Attitudinal Orientation

As mentioned above, attitudinal discourse features were found transversely across the

text extracts and so provide another possible dimension of analysis. Such discourse exhibits significant indicators of the author's attitude, quite explicitly in most cases, towards the target community. In these cases attitude became indistinguishable from affect to the extent that, in much positively or negatively inclined attitudinal discourse, the author appears to be making emotional investments. Affect here may be defined as emotional investment in or response to discourse, whereas, as described in detail in 3.4.2.1, attitude reflects evaluative statements encapsulated in discourse, or appreciation of such stance in dialogical discourse. Considering that much of the discourse came from, theoretically, affective-neutral sources such as government commercial guides, commercial travel guides and semi-commercial business culture guides, this overall trend was an unexpected result. The extracts in Table 29 give a flavour of how this attitude or affective investment is transmitted through the texts.

text	extract	discourse feature	author affective involvement
text005	Just to add further confusion Senhor [etc] first name last name is also not uncommon	perception attitude	The author has felt the confusion and been embarrassed and blames the cultural system for it.
text017	Portugal feels shrunken and laggardly today	perception attitude	This is the comment of someone who has come away from a visit with a negative impression. Moreover, the choice of adjectives indicates a level of distaste and condescension.
text046	Portugal's quality of life is grounded in a welcoming and generous nature – living and working here is both satisfying and enriching.	perception attitude	The author, who lives and works in Portugal, has grown and been enriched through contact with the culture.
text039	We found everybody overwhelmingly friendly, welcoming and helpful even the Police fell over themselves to help us out.	perception attitude	Not only did this visitor feel good about the trip but the police force behaviour is (unexpectedly) favourable compared to the police that they are used to in their own culture.

Table 29 – Text Extract Discourse Feature and Attitude

The relationship between discourse feature type and author attitude was investigated in

all the text extracts. The results are shown graphically in Figure 23 which demonstrates this relationship for two data sets. On the left the relationship is shown between attitude and discourse feature for the full corpus, that is the texts multiplied by the repeat factor. On the right, the same relationship is shown but only for the texts themselves. Approximately two-thirds of the few texts which were attributional in nature contain some attitudinal discourse features, with an equal balance between positive and negative orientations towards the target community in the whole discourse, although the texts themselves show a slightly stronger negative orientation. Opinion discourse is, in the whole corpus, evenly balanced between showing (49.81%) and not showing (50.19%) oriented author attitude. In the texts themselves the picture as regards opinion discourse is slightly different with more texts showing neutral (mixed or no) (58.91%) author attitude. Perception discourse is more strongly marked for author attitude in both the individual texts (64.02%) and the whole corpus (59.97%). It is also the only type of discourse that shows a significant difference between positive and negative orientations, being more negative than positive in both the whole corpus (36.55% versus 23.42%) and the individual texts themselves (33.18% versus 30.84%).

Figure 24 shows the relative proportions of author attitude expressed in online discourse for the whole corpus. If the mixed discourse can be assumed to contain an approximately equal amount of positively and negatively-oriented author attitude then it can be seen that overall of the 70.82% of texts that are marked for author attitude, the negatively-oriented discourse is slightly more prevalent (36.21%) than the positively-oriented discourse (34.61%) though this difference is slight.

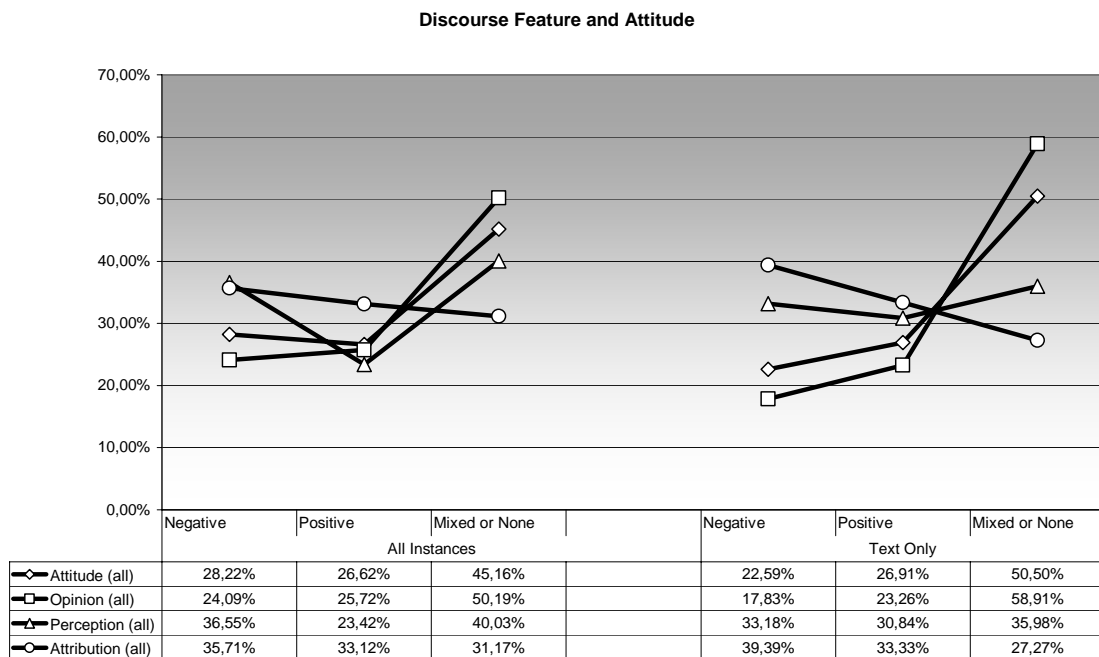


Figure 23 – Discourse Feature and Attitude in Online Discourse

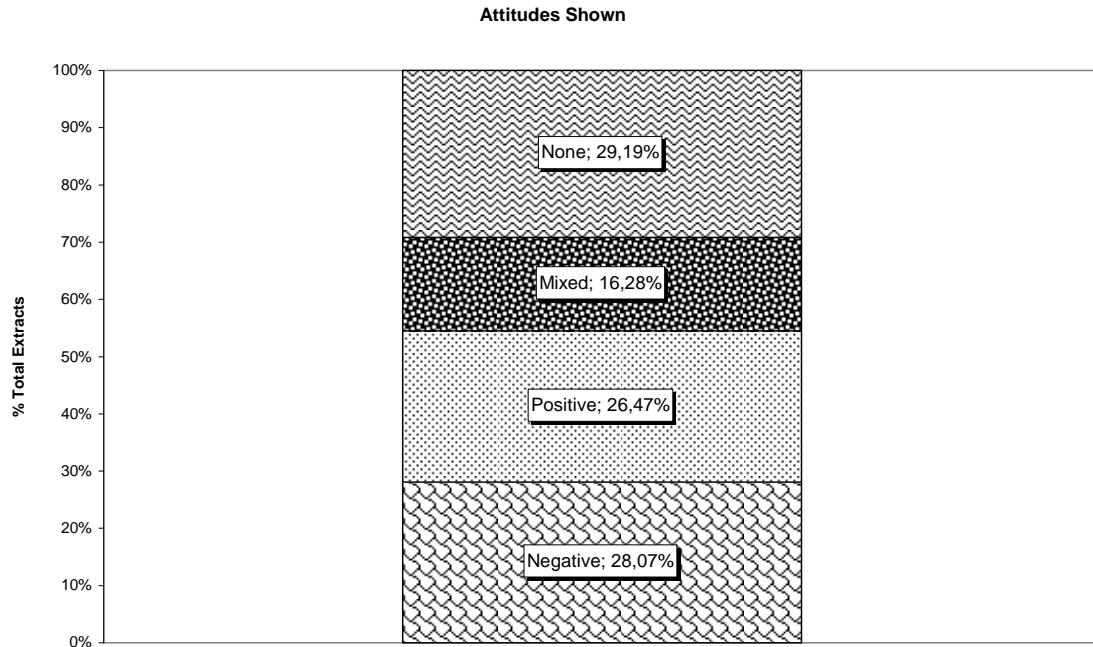


Figure 24 – Total Attitudes Shown in All Online Discourse Extracts

The general trend that may be extracted from this analysis of discourse feature and attitudinal orientation is three-fold. Firstly, approximately 70% of the online texts

contain attitudinal discourse features. This not only indicates that authors of online texts actively seek to impart their own attitudes and orientations towards the target culture but that the reader of the texts will also be exposed to a significant amount of author attitude and will, as a consequence, be more likely to form an attitudinal orientation towards the target culture even in a pre-visit stage.

Secondly, there is an indication that perception feature discourse, that is discourse based on experience, tends to be more negative than positive whereas opinion discourse and, to a slightly lesser extent, attributional discourse tend to be equally balanced between positive and negative author orientations. Obviously the communication of attitude from author to reader, in any given instance of information-seeking, will depend on which texts the reader actually reads. Given the preponderance of opinion feature discourse in the whole corpus it is likely that the majority of readers will receive a neutral or mixed attitudinal input from the texts they encounter. Readers of perceptual discourse, which is mostly discourse in which authors make explicit the experiential nature of their opinions, will, however, tend to be more subject to communication with the author which is negatively-oriented towards the target culture.

The third trend which is evident in these results is that the technology itself, that is, the nature of Internet searches and reading, has a cumulative and focussing effect on the attitudes expressed by authors. In the case of both opinion and perception discourse, which account for 95% of all discourse features used in this study, the effect of the multiplying of the individual text features by the frequency of occurrence of the texts as search results is to emphasise the negatively-oriented attitudinal discourse at the expense of the positively marked discourse and the discourse which has no attitudinal marking. Thus, the Internet seems to propagate negative attitude towards the target culture. This may prove to be a technologically enhanced and mediated version of ‘bad news travels fast’.

5.1.4 Topic, Concept and Attitude

5.1.4.1 Online Text Topic Analysis Results

The 43 separate topics that were discernible in the analysis of online text extracts can be grouped into larger categories of target community life-behaviours in a similar process to the grouping that has been a feature of the methodology of this study. This results in the classification shown in Table 30. This same information is represented graphically in Figure 25.

Group	Components	positive	neutral	negative	total
internal relations	sociability / family / gender relations / status / formality / hierarchy / appearance / politics / homogeneity	7.69%	19.02%	5.13%	31.84%
work	style of doing business / economy / efficiency / productivity / development / bureaucracy / gift-giving / corruption	4.91%	11.75%	8.12%	24.79%
lifestyle	time / lifestyle / food / driving / sport / violence / safety / health	4.91%	6.62%	4.70%	16.24%
external relations	Spain / communication / profile / racism / language	2.56%	6.62%	1.92%	11.11%
identity	tradition / past / sea / nationalism / religion	1.28%	7.05%	1.50%	9.83%
personal qualities	flexibility / honesty / sense of humour / trust / sensitivity / creativity / fairness / learning	2.35%	2.14%	1.71%	6.20%

Table 30 – Grouped Topics from Online Discourse Analysis

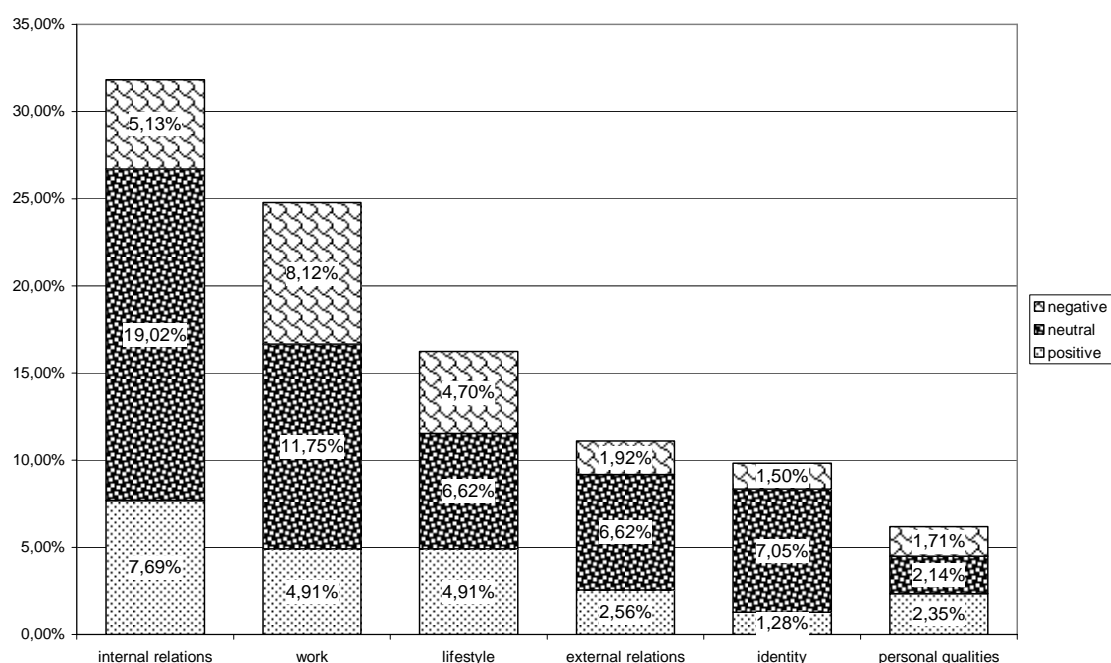


Figure 25 – Grouped Topics from Online Discourse Analysis

It should be noted that in these analyses the attitudinal factors (positive, negative or neutral) do not only refer to the author's own attitude, where discernible through careful

analysis, but also to the inherent value of the behaviour itself as understood by the researcher as a reading member of the discourse community. These judgements as to affective value may enhance one another or cancel each other out as the reader accepts or rejects dimensions of the preferred meaning in the text. Examples of how these values have been arrived at are given in Table 31. In the vast majority of cases, however, the preferred meaning understood through close analysis of the text has been the same the one that the researcher, as reader, has also come to. As a result, the differences between the reader as researcher and the reader as a member of the discourse community have been ignored in the overall analysis of results.

text	Extract	Author's Attitude as Analysed	Reader Value
text002	However, there are subtleties about the 'right' kind of jacket, shirt and tie which are too complicated to bother about, so I still always go for the standard suit.	negative	None
text013	The Portuguese will usually try to pay for a foreign guest's meal as part of the culture of hospitality.	neutral	neutral
text067	They began to file in, and after 15 or 20 minutes of desultory conversation with the early arrivals, I started the lecture. Students continued to file in and out during the lecture, giving it somewhat the character of a train station as well as a classroom	negative	neutral
text042	The Portuguese people are very friendly, polite, and eager to help you. The one thing that we have taken away with us from our trips has been the quality and sincerity of the people.	positive	positive

Table 31 – Author's Attitude and Reader's Meaning

Although the division into these larger categories is subjective, it is not arbitrary but pays close reference to the text extracts themselves. The first notable conclusion from this analytical exercise must be the fact that it was possible. That is, it is possible to extract a coherent description of the cultural representations that authors have of the behaviours of the Portuguese community in the context of searching for useful cultural information for a potential business visit. As has been mentioned above, the information resulting from such a search does not refer uniquely to work or doing business though this is a strongly noticeable element in the results. Most of the representations communicated to readers refer to perceptible categories of behaviour that business people visiting Portugal might be expected to observe or experience. This adds to the

validity of the study since it implies that the information is practical (because it can be perceived) and useful (because it can be experienced). Work and relationships, both internal and external, figure prominently in the results. These will be prime areas of concern to a visiting business person.

It is also notable that although the overall perceived positivity (23.7%) and negativity (23.06%) of the topic behaviours are finely balanced, in four out of six of the categories behaviour is perceived as being more positive than negative. It is only in the category of work that negativity (at 8.12%) outweighs positivity (at 4.91%). In most areas of life, then, the cultural representations revealed are ones that, where value judgements are made, focus on the positive side of the community's behaviours. It should also be borne in mind that 53% of all results are attitudinally neutral which means that, overall, nearly 75% of the representations that visitors might encounter before coming to Portugal will encourage a neutral or positive attitude towards the host culture.

5.1.4.2 Online Text Concept Analysis Results

The analysis of the texts for their conceptual content is intended to access the target group's behaviour in a more interpersonal and individual sense. It is a way of categorising behaviour across the range of the everyday activities and interactions that people are involved in. It is a different analysis from that of topic in that it more closely seeks to identify actual behavioural tendencies rather than the areas of activity which are most prominent in the lives of the members of this group. Thus, the topic study allowed the conclusion to be drawn that the family is an important arena for internal social relationships as are gender relations and status. The concept analysis seeks to identify the behaviours exhibited within and across these arenas. The difference between these two analyses might be characterised as the differences between the behaviours of Portuguese society as a whole, on the one hand, and the behaviours that are exhibited by people who are Portuguese on the other.

One important result of this separate analysis is the differences in the affective dimensions of the topics, or areas of life activity, and the behaviours within those areas. These are summarised in Figure 26.

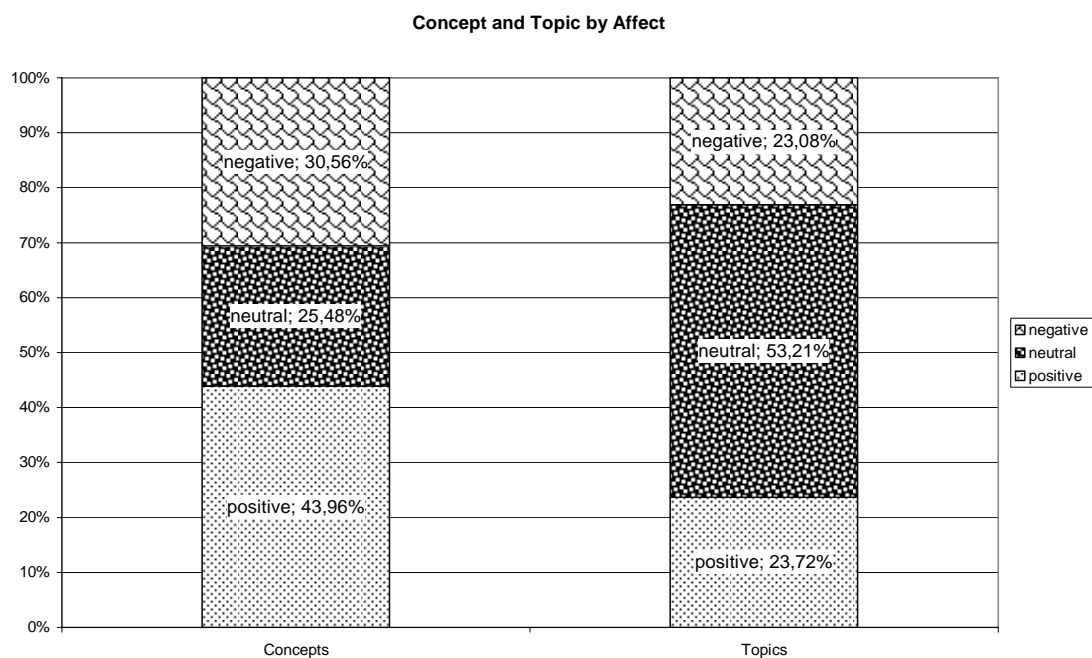


Figure 26 – Affective Dimensions of Concepts and Topics

There is an obvious difference between these two data sets, in that the cultural representations held of the Portuguese as people are considerably more positive than those of the large areas of life of society as a whole. This engenders a vision of the cultural group in which people are behaving in a positive manner despite the circumstances in which they find themselves, perhaps particularly in their dealings with people from other cultures. For example, many texts make reference to the importance of ‘status’ and ‘formality’ within Portuguese society. Examples include:

Titles in Portugal are a minefield which can take years to traverse. (text004)

and

Status is important. The use of academic titles, the trimmings of executive remuneration and other symbols are powerful. For example, car brand and model are astonishingly significant perks here--more than the salary itself. (text008)

Many more texts, however, make reference to the ‘friendly’, ‘welcoming’ and ‘laid back’ nature of the Portuguese and how these characteristics are employed in purposeful and persistent attempts to build close personal relationships with people they are working with from other cultures. Examples include:

family and personal contacts, relationships and networks. (text083)

The Portuguese people are very friendly, polite, and eager to help you. The one thing that we have taken away with us from our trips has been the quality and sincerity of the people. (text042)

the people of Portugal are one of the country's greatest assets. Warm and friendly, they welcome visitors to their country and take great pride in making sure that each guest has a wonderful time. (text077)

The analysis of concepts, as it cuts across areas of life to look at behaviour, shows evidence of representations of patterns of cultural behaviour that are both different from and similar to those suggested by the topic analysis alone. Prominent similarities may be found in the area of 'sociability' in which the topic analysis suggest that socialising itself is an important area of life for this community and the concept analysis suggest that being 'sociable' and 'forging relationships' is something that happens not just when socialising but in all everyday activities that the community are engaged in. This emphasis on social relationship building is confirmed by the grouping of topics as shown in Figure 25 in which internal relations at 31.4% of all topics mentioned is by far the most prominent area of social activity.

'Style of doing business' is another important area of mentally-represented social activity. The concept analysis allows a relationship to be made between this area of life and the various behaviours shown within in it. On the positively-oriented side are behaviours associated with 'intercultural competence', which includes language abilities, and being sociable and relaxed in dealing with others. On the neutral side are the behaviours associated with being 'cautious', 'traditional' and 'initially formal' together with a 'hierarchical' approach to business dealings and a certain level of image and status-consciousness. On the negative side, the most prominent behaviour mentioned is that related to being 'inefficient' and 'over-focussed on detail', making negotiations, for example, appear to take longer than they should. Additionally, 'unpunctuality' and a tendency to look on the negative side of life may also complicate the environment when working with people from other cultures.

Also relevant to the way in which people work with members of other cultures is the question of 'confidence' which seems to be divided between positive and negative

behaviours. On the positive side is the confidence in people's own lifestyle backed up by a calm and unhurried approach to doing business. On the negative side are behaviours associated with perceived position in the world order, related to feelings of inferiority in economic and power-relationship terms. This brief description of the relationship between behaviours and areas of life as perceived by authors of online texts has not looked at every behaviour mentioned as this would detract from the generalisability of the description which is essential to the purposes of this study. However, these comments have focussed on all those behaviours which, taken together, account for 80% of the behaviours mentioned in the texts. Examples of the cultural representations held in relation to these behaviours are given in Table 32.

Text Ref.	Text Excerpt	Behavioural Concept
text038	in one of which people are already preparing Portugal's next big party, the 2004 European football championship.	Sociable
text009	They would rather close a deal with a friend than an adversary. Don't let this fool you into thinking they're not tough negotiators--they are.	relationship-building
text003	Most Portuguese are tolerant, difficult to offend and used to dealing with people from other cultures	interculturally competent
text067	The Portuguese will cheerfully admit that they don't have quite the same concept of time as Americans.	laid back
text065	are thorough to a fault, often pouring over all the documents relative to a negotiation, and not too ready "to just hit the highlights"	cautious / detail-oriented
text079	U.S. firms getting involved in the Portuguese market should remember that modern sales techniques coexist with traditional practices. For example, many Portuguese business people still consider personal contact and a handshake a stronger bond than a contract.	traditional
text004	Do not use first names unless invited.	initially formal
text082	Portuguese business is hierarchical. The highest-ranking person makes decisions.	hierarchical
text007	Meetings are badly run and inconclusive.	inefficient
text001	Avoid making appointments earlier than 10 am as people do not tend to arrive at work on time and need their first 'cafezinho' [espresso type coffee] to get going.	unpunctual

text024	What do they think of Portugal? They are quite sad about it. But they feel that it has become too difficult to earn enough there to afford a decent living standard. They often state that it's a beautiful country to visit, but not to live in if you are poor.	pessimistic
text031	It is also derived from envy and, what some observers see as a bit of an inferiority complex.	Perceived inferiority

Table 32 – Examples of Most Frequent Cultural Representations (Concepts)

Without a comparative study on another cultural grouping it is not possible to comment more extensively on the particular behaviours and concepts that constitute the representations found in online discourse. It is only possible to focus on the internal similarities, dissimilarities and connections found within the data.

As a teacher, and for pedagogical purposes, however, it is possible to draw up an overall characterisation, from these results, of the likely interaction that might take place between foreign business visitors and their Portuguese hosts. In terms of format and overall impact, this characterisation will necessarily depend on the cultural background of the visitor. For some visitors, from other Western cultures, for example, the overall impression that the data gives is one of essentially positive cultural representations of individual members of the Portuguese community who interact with foreigners in such a way as to overcome what are perceived to be the limitations of the social system within which they live. The main cultural representations focus on the interpersonal and intercultural skills that people have. The confidence and comfort that they derive from their own brand of lifestyle and traditional ways of being jars somewhat with the demands of modern internationalism and the globalisation of working practices in what is very much an ongoing process of adaptation and growth. This process, or struggle, is one that is taking place at a different pace in different arenas of everyday life.

5.2 Student Survey Questionnaire

A large majority (90) of the 98 students taking part in the questionnaire claimed to have had recent contact with a non-Portuguese speaker of English other than English teachers. As a result, there was no viable way of comparing the responses of these respondents who had had contact with members of other English-speaking cultures with those few who hadn't (especially as 3 of the latter failed to fill out most of the questionnaire). Consequently, the data did not make it possible to distinguish between the representations that students have of their own culture and the representations that they believe others might have of them. Thus, the representation-related data collected in the survey is necessarily a combination of what students believe about themselves

together with influences of members of other cultures either as personal contacts or through such channels as the media. This changed, to a certain extent, the focus of the study since the comparison that will be made is between the representations contained in the online discourse and the representations that the students have of themselves and that others have of them but without being able to differentiate between these last two.

Very few respondents added topics to the topic list (see 3.5.1 and Appendix 2), the only topics that were added were tourism, the climate, understanding foreigners and beauty of the country. These were added by students as they were answering this part of the questionnaire. On reflection, it might have been more productive and representative to have asked students with extra topic ideas to share them with the group before marking answers to this part given that each of these extra topics was only mentioned once. This lack of additional topics means that either the students found the 32 topics sufficient to choose from, or they were somewhat disinterested in the task. Given that nearly all respondents made the effort to respond fairly fully to Part 5, the first of these two possibilities seems the more likely. There was, however, some confusion with the topic ‘time-keeping’ (selected by 17 respondents) with a number of students commenting afterwards that they had not really understood what it meant. This lack of understanding may have been fairly general since the adjective ‘unpunctual’ was selected by nearly 75% of respondents in Part 4.

5.2.1 *Questionnaire Parts 2 and 3*

Parts 2 and 3 of the questionnaire both focussed on topics in the sense of areas of life that are prevalent in descriptions of the social group. Part 2 was designed to be interpreted in conjunction with Part 3 in that the former should act as introductory phase to the latter. The students had already been sensitised to the general focus of the investigation through the pre-questionnaire tasks (see Table 6), however their cultural representations of their own culture were not going to be extracted via dialogical discourse but through self-reflection. In a preliminary phase, then, they were given the list of topics to choose from as a further form of sensitisation task with the expectation that this would allow more accurate data to be gathered through the selection task in Part 3 and the open reflection task in Part 5.

This process is evidenced by the fact that in Part 3 students were much more clearly able to resolve their topic selections into positively and negatively-oriented groups (as Figure 17 shows). This is to be expected when reflecting on one’s own culture as judgement values are much more likely to be either positive or negative rather than neutral. The emphasis of these judgements is likely to be initially positive, as it is a natural human tendency to focus on that which is good before that which we perceive to

be bad. Further reflection may lead to a more balanced view and the consideration of both positive and negative characteristics of our own culture. This tendency was in fact found in this study.

In Part two, seven of the nine most relevant topics are viewed as being largely positive (see Table 17 and Figure 14). The top 9 topics account for 43.19% of all topics selected and the breakdown of their orientation is positive = 30.54%, negative = 6.37% and neutral = 6.28%. The most significant of these topics is that related to socialising and relationship building ('hospitality', 'food' and 'welcome') followed by lifestyle or way of being ('tradition', 'lifestyle' and 'sport'). It should be noted that this data was collected a short time before Portugal hosted the Euro2004 Football Championship which may have influenced the degree to which sport was selected as an important area of Portuguese life.

One of the two topics which do not fit into this pattern is language, which is not demonstrably either positive or negative in general characterisation. It is not possible to know exactly what the respondents were referring to when selecting topics, particularly in the case of language, which was not mentioned at all in Part 5. However, the online discourse data suggests that language falls into two categories as an area of activity. The first is that in which the Portuguese are perceived as good intercultural communicators since they learn other languages easily. The second refers to the Portuguese language itself and there is evidence that the language is considered to be both attractive and difficult to learn. This very mixed picture of language, if it is similar to that held by the respondents would account for the unclear classification of language as to its attitudinal orientation. It is possible, therefore, that the questionnaire was not sufficiently detailed as regards this point.

The final topic in the top nine is that of 'driving', which is overwhelmingly looked upon as negative. Again, this may reflect current events and preoccupations, though it also figures, although less prominently, in the online discourse.

In Part 3, the same overall pattern emerges in relation to topic selection. However, there are some relevant differences. As Table 19 and Figure 18 show there was some movement in the way the topics were viewed by the students. As has already been mentioned, the responses to Part 3 are more clearly resolved into positive and negative attributes. Additionally, the relevant importance of some topics changed dramatically. In Part 3 more emphasis was given to the topics of 'food' and 'hospitality', though their positions relative to the whole group of topics remained virtually unchanged as they simply switched places. 'Sport' was also considered far more important in Part 3,

moving from 8th to 3rd place, again possibly as a result of selection on current events. 'Economy' and 'level of development' also showed significant increases, with both moving into the top nine topics. 'History' also moved up from 9th to 5th, though, interestingly, 'tradition' fell slightly. A similar pattern is to be seen with 'welcome' and 'hospitality' with the latter rising significantly and the former falling slightly. This may well be due to some form of topic creep which has resulted in overlapping topics being consolidated into one preferred topic.

Four topics fell very significantly in Part 3: Lifestyle (-54.96%), Family (-72.85%), Racism (-73.73%) and Education (-80.64%). 'Lifestyle' moved from 5th to 13th place, 'education' from 12th to 22nd place, 'family' from 14th to 19th place and 'racism' from 17th to 24th place. These then, are the four most salient topics that, when subject to a process of reflection, seem less important to the respondents.

5.2.2 Questionnaire Parts 4 and 5

In part four of the questionnaire, the respondents were asked to select the adjectives they felt most reflected the characteristics of the target community. These selections were then grouped into larger categories according to their inherent similarities and to facilitate comparisons with the online discourse. The attribution of positive, negative or neutral connotational characteristics to the adjectives was carried out by the researcher.

The same interpretative stance to this data is taken here as was taken in the analysis of the relationship between topic and concept in the online discourse. The behaviour concepts selected in Parts 4 and evident in Part 5 are taken as relating to behaviours that cut across areas of life activity. In part four, 13 behavioural concepts account for 84.88% of all concepts selected. Of these 13 concepts only three are positively marked: 'hospitable', 'sociable' and 'cheerful' (totalling 27.43%). All three of these behavioural concepts can be found in the social processes of intercultural encounters, socialising and relationship-building in business.

Two concepts, 'family-oriented' and 'hierarchical', are neutrally marked which may indicate a level of ambivalence. 'Family-oriented' is most probably seen as negative by some respondents but as positive by considerably more and the reverse may be true of 'hierarchical', although it is impossible to distinguish these opinions here.

The overall implication of the data is that in dealing with people from other cultures the target community performs positively.

Eight of the concepts, however, are negatively marked: 'lazy', 'bureaucratic', 'poor', 'inefficient', 'pessimistic', 'male-oriented', 'poorly educated' and 'corrupt' (totalling

45.86%). These, as a group, seem to be the type of behaviours more closely associated with work-related activities. There is, therefore, an overall indication that life activities associated with socialising, relationships and generally dealing with people are perceived positively whereas the world of work and professional competences are perceived more negatively.

This tendency to view lifestyle as positive but work as negative is reinforced by the results of Part 5. Perhaps because they are taking part in a business related course and are soon to become members of the professional community, students' comments tended to focus more on the competences related to the world of work rather than lifestyle. Of the top 12 behaviours chosen, which together account for nearly 80% of all behaviours mentioned, nine are negatively marked and only three positively marked. There are no neutral responses, indicating the same selective tendencies when moving from Parts 2 to 3 of the questionnaire.

Being 'hospitable' continues to be the most mentioned concept and, in terms of positive concepts, is accompanied by 'physical attractiveness' of the country and the 'businesslike' nature of the people. These latter two concepts do not appear in Part 4, though beauty was added by one respondent in Part 2. Physical attractiveness is a quality of the country, but only indirectly relates to the culture of the people. Being businesslike is an interesting addition and is a composite of the following aspects as mentioned by respondents:

serious business people / businesslike / good to do business with / good place to invest / do business / collaborative / informal / laid back in business situations / reasonable to negotiate with / not too demanding / like to build relationships in business

Examples of actual comments include, from respondent 28:

I think that foreign business people like to do business in Portugal because the Portuguese are trustworthy and serious doing business.

and from respondent 94:

In my point of view, foreign business people mostly like Portugal and enjoy doing business with us

However, this businesslike quality is not always perceived as being wholly positive since that which is good for doing business is not necessarily good for the people involved. A number of respondents make reference, for example, to the cheapness of

labour and the tendency of foreign companies to buy up Portuguese companies. As respondent 3 puts it:

People think about owning enterprises as we work for so few money comparing to the rest of the European countries.

and respondent 15:

I think that foreign business people believe that the Portuguese are good for negotiating. We don't demand too much.

Respondent 10 puts this point even more bluntly:

I think it's easy for a foreign businessman/businesswoman to convince his or her counterpart that his or her position is the right one: Portuguese are easy to influence.

Most of the negative responses that respondents gave to Part 5 of the questionnaire concern ways of work. In fact, the general category of 'unbusinesslike' (5.42%) outscored 'businesslike' (4.41%). The other, more specific categories, refer to institutionalised ('bureaucracy', 'underdeveloped', 'poor', 'low profile'), semi-institutionalised ('lazy', 'disorganised', 'unpunctual') or personality ('sad') characteristics. The second most mentioned characteristic in this part of the questionnaire revolves around the low profile that respondents feel that Portugal has in the world. This is often expressed in general terms, as respondent 4 says:

I believe that many people don't know that Portugal exists, for its size.

or, more specifically, in relation to neighbouring Spain as respondent 9 writes:

I think that foreign business people think that Portugal make part of Spain and the Portuguese are reliable of (reliant on?) this country.

5.2.3 Student Survey – General Comments

One important trend in the data is made noticeable by the fact that, in Part 4 of the questionnaire, respondents tended to select negatively-oriented behaviour concepts, a tendency which increased in Part 5. This contrasts with the tendency to select positively-oriented topics in Parts 2 and 3. A comparison of this data is shown in Figure 27. These results show a clear pattern, which is that on initial reflection, in Part 3, the respondents organise their concepts into mostly positive and negative connotations with a marked preference for positive connotations. As further reflecting takes place, there is initially some uncertainty, hence the increased neutrality of Part 3, followed by an increasing tendency to describe the negative aspects of the target community's

behaviour, such that Part 5 is almost an inverse image of Part 3.

This increasing emphasis on the negative is an unexpected result of this survey since, and despite the fact that there is no inherent comparison with other cultures built into the survey technique, the assumption commonly encountered in cultural studies is that there is a tendency to see one's own culture in a positive and ethnocentric way (Brewer & Campbell, 1976; Mummendey & Simon, 1983; Sinkovics & Holzmüller, 1994; Axelrod & Hammond, 2003). There may be here, therefore, more influence of how the respondents believe the culture is viewed by others than was initially posited. That is, there are two possible conclusions that may be drawn from this evidence. Either the members of the Portuguese business community tend to see themselves negatively, or they believe that members of other cultural groups do. Resolving how other cultural groups see them will, therefore, be of crucial importance in allowing the students to learn about the differences between the way they see themselves and the way they are seen. There is, built into the evidence in this survey, some likelihood that the opinions of others about the self are given some form of prevalence over the commonly expected positive self-impression that is found in most cultures.

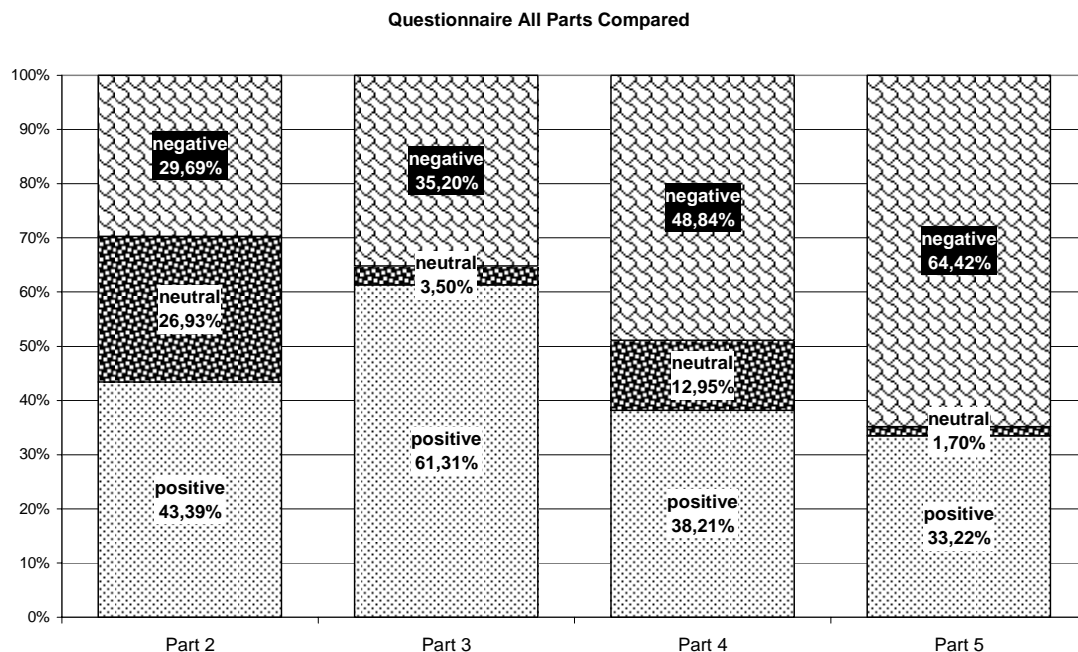


Figure 27 – Questionnaire Results – All Parts Compared

The overall impression, of a laid back and sociable lifestyle together with a less efficient attitude towards work are summed up in the comments of respondent 75:

Podem pensar que os portugueses são um pouco desorganizados e que não são muito pontuais, mas que são um povo amigável com quem podem negociar, pois os portugueses são sociáveis

In a similar vein, respondent 2 comments:

Também gostam dos portugueses porque os acham muito hospitaleiros, acham que recebemos bem os estrangeiros. No entanto, acham Portugal um país cinzento no que diz respeito a ideais e ao desenvolvimento, pensam que os Portugueses são pessimistas nos assuntos do dia-a-dia e com os problemas que surgem.

and respondent 8:

Os estrangeiros, de forma geral, acham que Portugal é um país sociável e muito bom para as férias. Quanto aos Portugueses, que ainda cá vivem, acham-nos pouco empenhados em desenvolver economicamente o seu próprio país.

and respondent 18:

I believe they also might like Portugal for its weather and people but will usually become very disappointed with our disorganisation and laziness.

5.3 Online Discourse and Student Survey Comparison

This study has shown that descriptions of the cultural representations that authors of online discourse have of the Portuguese business community are extractable and classifiable. The same is true for the descriptions that members of that community, in this case students, have of themselves or believe that others have of them. One of the main aims stated in the introduction was to compare such descriptions with a view to recommending guidelines for the construction of a teaching syllabus dealing with intercultural competences.

The number of online texts, 92, is comparable in quantity with the number of students, 98, though, of course, there is no way of knowing how many different authors have been involved in the production of these texts. Additionally this study took the methodological approach that categories of concepts should grow out of the data, through re-sampling analysis, and not be preordained by a specific theoretical orientation. One consequence of this is that the data from the two halves of the study can be compared. However, this comparison is, firstly, approximate and qualitative and secondly subjective since it is the researcher who must match up the disparate data.

Nevertheless, it is possible to draw some conclusions as to likely content for such a syllabus. For this to be possible, further grouping of topics and concepts has been carried out. Where topics and concepts are nearly comparable they have not been grouped; where they fit more easily comparable categories, they have been grouped into these categories. Table 33 shows how the topic categories have been grouped for comparison

mutual concept	online discourse	questionnaire part 3
sociability	sociability	hospitality & welcome
development	development	level of development
economy	economy	economy
politics	politics	politics
family	family	family
doing business	style of doing business	neg. style
efficiency	efficiency	efficiency
productivity	productivity	productivity & type of workers
bureaucracy	bureaucracy	bureaucracy
external relations	Spain & profile	Europe
language	language & communication	language
time	time	time-keeping
trust	trust	trust
lifestyle	lifestyle	lifestyle
health	health	health
driving	driving	driving
sport	sport	sport
religion	religion	religion
creativity	creativity	creativity
food	food	food
honesty	honesty	honesty
gender relations	gender relations	women
corruption	corruption	corruption
history	past	history
tradition	tradition	tradition
racism	racism	racism

education	learning	education
safety	violence & safety	
status	status & hierarchy & appearance & formality	
flexibility	flexibility	
nationalism	nationalism	
sense of humour	sense of humour	
sea	sea	
fairness	fairness	
gift-giving	gift-giving	
homogeneity	homogeneity	
sensitivity	sensitivity	
immigration		immigration
technology		technology
climate		climate
country beauty		country beauty
reliability		reliability
tourism		tourism

Table 33 – Discourse and Survey Comparison Categories - Topics

5.3.1 Comparison of Topic Areas

In terms of topic areas, that is areas of social activity which are determined to be particularly marked in the target community, Table 34 shows a percentage comparison between the two data sets.

	Online Discourse				Survey Part 3			
	pos	neut.	neg.	total	pos	neut.	neg.	total
doing business	1.07	8.97	1.71	11.75	0.47	0.23	0.23	0.93
status	0.21	6.84	3.21	10.26	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
sociability	5.98	3.85	0.21	10.04	16.78	0.00	0.00	16.78
external relations	0.64	5.13	1.28	7.05	0.47	0.23	1.86	2.56
family	0.00	4.70	0.85	5.56	0.93	0.00	0.00	0.93
gender relations	1.50	2.99	0.85	5.34	0.00	0.00	0.47	0.47
level of development	1.92	1.50	1.50	4.91	0.23	0.93	4.20	5.36
time	0.64	2.99	1.07	4.70	0.00	0.00	0.70	0.70

tradition	0.64	3.21	0.64	4.49	4.43	0.00	0.23	4.66
lifestyle	1.71	1.71	0.21	3.63	1.40	0.00	0.70	2.10
language	1.92	1.28	0.21	3.42	1.86	1.17	1.40	4.43
food	1.28	1.71	0.43	3.42	14.45	0.00	0.70	15.15
efficiency	0.43	0.21	1.71	2.35	0.23	0.00	0.23	0.47
economy	0.43	0.64	1.07	2.14	0.23	0.23	5.36	5.83
productivity	1.07	0.21	0.85	2.14	0.23	0.00	0.70	0.94
honesty	0.43	0.21	1.28	1.92	0.23	0.00	0.00	0.23
history	0.21	1.07	0.64	1.92	6.29	0.00	0.23	6.53
flexibility	1.28	0.64	0.00	1.92	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
driving	0.00	0.00	1.71	1.71	0.00	0.00	7.46	7.46
religion	0.00	1.28	0.21	1.50	1.17	0.23	0.47	1.86
nationalism	0.43	1.07	0.00	1.50	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
safety	0.64	0.00	0.64	1.28	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
bureaucracy	0.00	0.00	1.07	1.07	0.00	0.00	3.03	3.03
sport	0.64	0.21	0.21	1.07	10.02	0.00	0.23	10.26
education	0.21	0.21	0.43	0.85	0.00	0.23	0.47	0.70
racism	0.00	0.21	0.43	0.64	0.23	0.00	0.47	0.70
politics	0.00	0.43	0.00	0.43	0.00	0.00	1.40	1.40
trust	0.00	0.43	0.00	0.43	0.47	0.00	0.00	0.47
health	0.00	0.00	0.43	0.43	0.00	0.00	1.17	1.17
sense of humour	0.21	0.21	0.00	0.43	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
sea	0.00	0.43	0.00	0.43	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
creativity	0.00	0.21	0.00	0.21	0.47	0.00	0.00	0.47
corruption	0.00	0.00	0.21	0.21	0.00	0.00	1.40	1.40
fairness	0.21	0.00	0.00	0.21	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
gift-giving	0.00	0.21	0.00	0.21	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
homogeneity	0.00	0.21	0.00	0.21	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
sensitivity	0.00	0.21	0.00	0.21	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Immigration	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.23	0.23	0.70	1.17
Technology	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.93	0.93
Climate	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.23	0.00	0.00	0.23

Country Beauty	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.23	0.23
Reliability	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.23	0.23
Tourism	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.23	0.00	0.00	0.23

Table 34 – Discourse and Survey Comparison – Topic data

The correlation between the total percentage for the data sets is 0.33 which is relatively low and shows that there are significant differences between them. Figure 28 shows a selection of this data graphically. It focuses on the topics where there is significant difference between the two data sets and where a topic has a value greater than 1.5%. The areas in which the two data sets show most similarity are education, religion, tradition and level of development. The biggest differences are to be found in the areas of doing business, sociability, status, family, external relations, food, gender relations, time, driving and sport. It is logical that the online discourse will make far more reference to styles and methods of doing business since this was the general topic focus of the text search and so no pedagogical conclusion can be reached as regards this topic except to suggest that this topic area is brought to students' attention.

Status, external relations, family, gender relations and time are all given considerably more prominence in the online discourse than in the students' appreciation of the cultural group so more emphasis would be placed on these areas in a teaching syllabus. On the other hand, the students have given more emphasis to sociability, food, economy history, driving and sport. In the case of sociability, both sets of data show high levels of awareness of sociability and so no real change would need to be made to teaching in this area. Students may need to be made aware that members of other cultures do not have quite such prominent cultural representations of food, history, driving and sport as the students may assume.

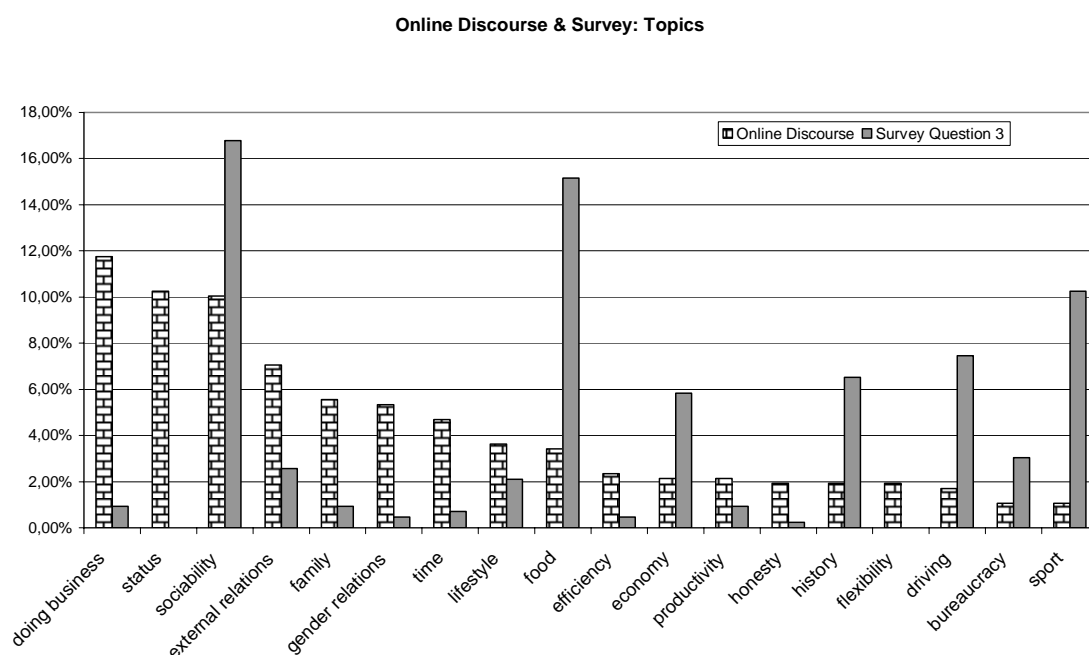


Figure 28 – Online Discourse and Survey Part 3 – Topic Comparison

5.3.2 Comparison of Concept Areas

A similar analysis was made of the concepts selected in Part 5 of the survey and from the concepts extracted from the online texts. The results are shown in Table 35.

Concept	Online Discourse		Student Survey	
	Components	%	Components	%
interculturally competent	interculturally competent / polite / tolerant / sociable / welcoming	18.48%	hospitable	13.90%
status-oriented	authoritarian / hierarchical / image-conscious / inferior / formal / conservative / rule-bound / independent	12.25%	status-conscious	0.68%
lifestyle-oriented	laid back /	12.05%	lifestyle / good food	2.71%

	comfortable / pacific / relaxed time			
inefficient	inefficient	4.79%	disorganised	6.78%
careful	cautious / thorough / reserved	4.23%	careful	0.00%
past-oriented	traditional / rural	4.09%	traditional	1.69%
interculturally incompetent	poor communicators / fussy / complicated / inconsiderate / rude	3.28%	rude	0.68%
family-oriented	family-oriented	2.89%	family-oriented	0.34%
poor	poor	2.80%		0.00%
honest	honest / law- abiding	2.68%	honest	2.71%
developed	modern	2.50%	developing well	0.68%
generally businesslike	tough / direct / punctual / flexible / quick learners	2.36%	well organised / businesslike	4.75%
sad	pessimistic	2.30%	sad	3.39%
unbalanced & unfair	sexist / racist / socially- divided	2.19%	male-oriented	1.02%
proud	proud / face- saving / nationalistic	2.19%	proud	0.00%
dishonest	dishonest	1.93%	corrupt / untrustworthy	1.36%
hard-working	hard-working	1.91%	hard-working	2.03%
unpunctual	unpunctual	1.85%	unpunctual	9.83%
dangerous	dangerous	1.85%	poor driving	0.34%
underdeveloped	unsophisticated	1.71%	undeveloped	6.10%
generally positive	clean / cultured / gentle / likeable /	1.65%	generally positive	0.34%

	attractive linguistically / not nationalistic / stable / Latin			
generally negative	selfish / expensive / unclean / differences	1.53%	generally negative / malleable	1.36%
balanced & fair	equal opportunity	1.37%	balanced & fair	0.00%
bureaucratic	bureaucratic	1.18%	bureaucratic	3.39%
identity	unimportant	1.15%	low profile (for business)	10.85%
modest	modest	1.09%		0.00%
tactile	tactile	0.76%		0.00%
sports oriented	sports oriented	0.70%		0.00%
religious	religious	0.48%		0.00%
creative	creative	0.42%	creative	0.68%
generally unbusinesslike	short-sighted	0.31%	unbusinesslike	5.42%
political	political	0.31%		0.00%
surprising	surprising	0.31%		0.00%
poorly trained	uneducated	0.14%	poor training	1.69%
cheap	cheap	0.14%	cheap	1.36%
lazy	lazy	0.00%	lazy	7.12%
physically attractive		0.00%	physically attractive	4.41%
poor	poor	0.00%	poor	3.73%
tourism investment		0.00%	tourism investment	0.68%

Table 35 – Discourse and Survey Comparison – Concept Data

The process of grouping of concepts, as reflected in the names of the groups, was carried out in a slightly differently way in this comparison process as the students, in their responses to Part 5, had responded with a mixture of concepts and topics. The correlation between the total percentage for the data sets is -0.103 which indicates that there are significant differences between them. Figure 29 shows a selection of this data graphically. It focuses on the topics where there is significant difference between the two data sets and where a topic has a value greater than 1.5%.

Online Discourse & Survey: Concepts

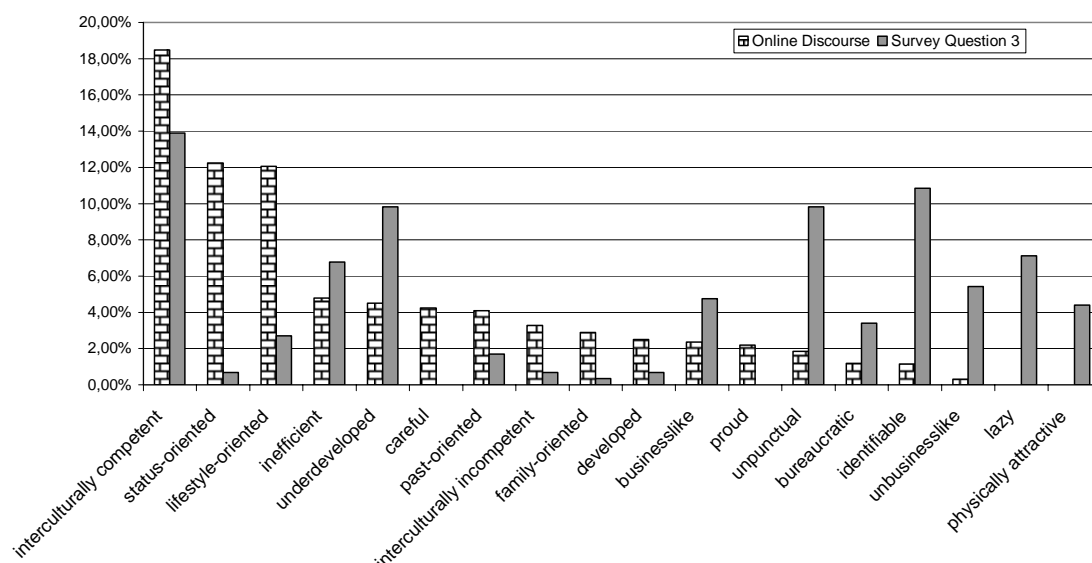


Figure 29 – Online Discourse and Survey Section 5 – Concept Comparison

In general terms, the areas in which the two data sets show most similarity are those related to being interculturally competent, inefficient, past-oriented and businesslike. The largest differences between the two sets of data relate to being status-oriented, lifestyle-oriented, underdeveloped, careful, unpunctual, identifiable, unbusinesslike, lazy, physically attractive and poor. Intercultural competence here has been grouped according to those characteristics which would facilitate an intercultural exchange. As can be seen, this is not only the most prominent result but there is close agreement between the two data sets. This corresponds well with the sociability result in the topic analysis indicating that the social side of doing business is viewed similarly by both populations.

In both the topic and the concept analyses, the online discourse makes far greater reference to the status and image orientation of the target community than the students seem to be aware of. Authors of online discourse also comment fully, and positively, on the general lifestyle of the Portuguese. This is an orientation that the students are aware of in general topic terms but less so as being a unique quality of the social group. This may be why they mention it less when describing what it means to be Portuguese in their selection of characteristics that the Portuguese do show but which could equally well be assigned to other cultural groups. There are a number of possible explanations for this, including the possibility that the respondents wish to emphasise similarity across cultures, or express the need to fit in with idealised or perceived pan-cultural

traits.

Both students and online discourse make significant mention of the economic and developmental status of the country, though the students seem to be more sensitive to this and tend to assume that the status of the country outside Portugal is lower than it actually is. This is reinforced by the high number of mentions that students make about the extent to which Portugal is identifiable on the world stage. There is a corollary to this observation in that those authors writing online about Portugal know of its existence and that the students' opinions about the perceived insignificance of the country may well be true in a wider audience. However, the focus here is on the concepts accrued through reading online discourse. Visitors to Portugal, in other words, do not necessarily come here feeling that they are visiting a small and insignificant country.

There are other conceptual areas in which the students tend to assume that business people visiting Portugal would do so with a previously acquired negative orientation towards the Portuguese business community. They believe that certain social behaviours, such as unpunctuality, being inefficient and laziness together with being insignificant are uppermost in visitors minds whereas, and assuming that these visitors have been informed by what they have read on the Internet, this is far from the case.

5.3.3 Summary of Comparison of Online Discourse and Survey Results

In general conclusion, members of the business community in Portugal, in the subgroup whose identity is that of business students, tend to assume that visitors will come to Portugal with a far more negative orientation towards their business dealings than is actually the case. This negativity is, they believe, directed towards both the people as individuals and the system they work within and the work practices they exhibit. The evidence from online discourse indicates that there is, overall, a much more positive orientation to Portugal than this, and that this positivity is specifically, but not exclusively, focussed on the social behaviours, lifestyle and intercultural competences shown by the people. This difference in positivity, or more accurately in analytical terms a difference in negativity, can be seen very clearly in the data results and is summarised in Figure 30. These very clear perceptual differences may be built into the intercultural competence of a business and language skills teaching syllabus.

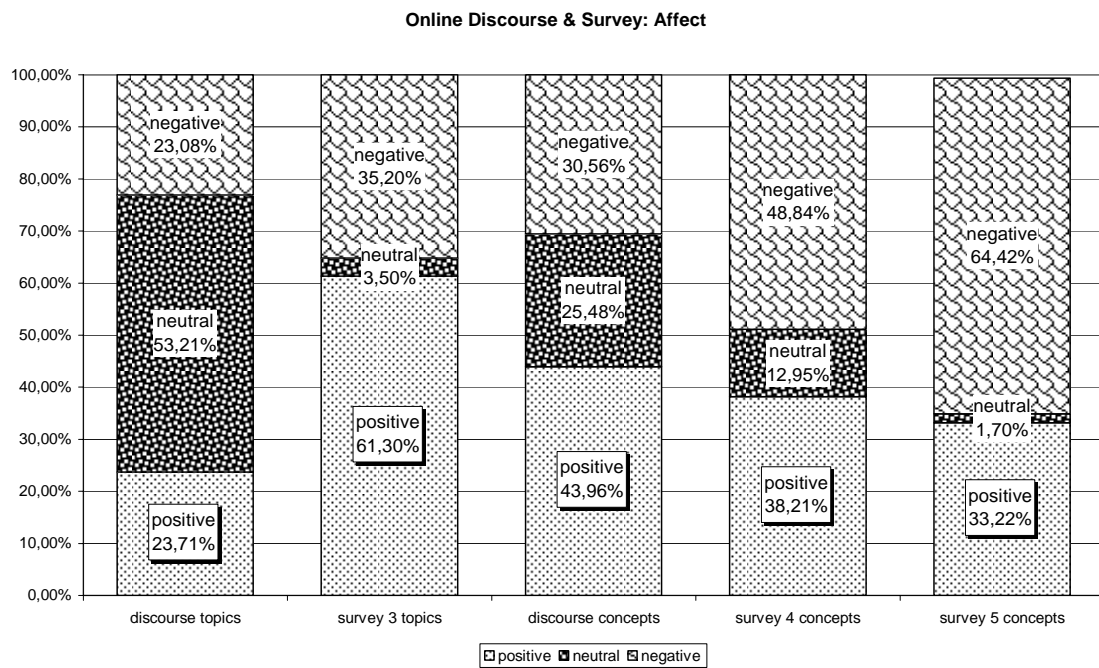


Figure 30 – Overall Attitudes Shown by Online Discourse and the Survey

6 Conclusions

This study set out to investigate the practices of a specific discourse community, authors and readers of online discourse relating to business practices in Portugal. It then compared how those practices relate to the cultural representations employed in intercultural encounters between business people from Portugal and members of other cultural groups. This comparison was made on the basis of defining areas of difference which could possibly be incorporated into the intercultural competence section of a language and business skills teaching syllabus.

The investigation was oriented by a number of specific research questions. All of these have been addressed by the study with generally satisfactory outcomes. The first main research question asked how the Portuguese, Portugal and doing business in Portugal is represented on text-based web pages. This question presupposed a number of sub-questions, the first of which related to the type of sites which contain the target information. The search results showed that the number of sites is relatively low and that these sites can be organised into a small number of text genres (see Table 9). Twenty-nine, or 31%, of the pages found were overtly and specifically oriented and designed to describe the Portuguese business community and their behavioural practices. The rest of the sites, the large majority of which were travel or whole country oriented, referred to the social behaviour of the population as a whole.

The second sub-question related to the encoding of cultural representations in the texts and, specifically, the level of depth at which this encoding took place at together with its evidential or contextual circumstances. Analysis of the texts resulted in short text extracts which, in the vast majority of cases, made very explicit reference to types of cultural behaviour rendering deep analysis unnecessary. The cultural representations held by the text authors were, in the majority of cases, explicitly stated. The authors' attitudes, motivations and intentions were accessed with relative ease, as evidenced by the fact that the researcher, as a researcher, and the researcher, as a reading member of the discourse community, tended to make the same meanings from the texts. That is, the authors' preferred meanings, as expressed through explicitly stated opinions, perceptions and attitudes coincided with those of the results of an applied discourse analysis. This, to a certain extent, validates the study's methodological approach.

The third sub-question was related to the processes of extraction of information, communication and sharing or building of meaning within the discourse community. Analysis according to discourse feature type allowed a separation of texts into four main types: opinion, perceptual, attributional and attitudinal. The first of these, in which

received wisdom and generally held beliefs are turned into cultural facts, was the most common. The second most common was that of perceptual discourse in which the author makes explicit or implicit reference to actual experience. Attributional, or explanatory, discourse was rare in the sample. Attitudinal discourse, that is emotional and affective orientation of the author towards the target community, was highly evident, both explicitly and implicitly, across the range of discourse. As a result, this attitudinal type of discourse was separated out and resolved into positive, neutral and negative components which were then used to examine similarities and differences between the other types of discourse feature and between the discourse and the students' cultural representations.

The researcher adopted an ethnographic approach to the analysis of the web pages. This was oriented and controlled by the parameters resulting from a trial study on a parallel community, which enabled the search, information-seeking and communication features of the study to be highlighted. Although the emphasis was on information-seeking there were a number of communication-oriented outcomes. The first of these was the tendency to build one's own text by following hyperlinks. The second was in the acceptance and rejection of sites on the grounds of specific, and subjective, criteria which led to the privileging of some texts over others. Thirdly, and most importantly, was the sequential and cumulative building of internal representations relating to the target community. There may not have been direct communication between reader and specific authors but there was communication between members of the discourse community as a whole as some representations were accepted or reinforced and others were rejected or re-hypothesised. The methodological approach based on grounded theory facilitated this cyclical process of re-considering and re-grouping the results and has been interpreted by the researcher as being reflective of the way in which individual readers come to the construction of cultural representations.

Other sub-questions focused on the quantity, reliability, internal similarity and dissimilarity and specificity of the information. The number of web sites and pages analysed resulted in just under 100,000 words of text in total and 383 text extracts which proved sufficient for analysis purposes. The level of confidence that readers place in online information will be high if the sources are considered to be authoritative and this was the case for a significant proportion of the text results. There was some, but not much, information on Portuguese immigrants in other countries, notably the UK and Canada. However, because, in most other cases, the information was not country specific it was not possible to analyse the data for community-specific factors. It is possible a proportion of the cultural representations were built by the authors through

contact with Portuguese communities other than those residing and working in Portugal. Although many texts explicitly referred to the country, many others did not.

The information extracted and the representations it contained showed a high level of internal and external similarity and validity. The initial search was statistically similar to the trial search in terms of page type, though the trial search didn't result in as many authoritative sources as the actual search. The analysis of the data into topics and concepts and their relative affective markings also correlated strongly. The different types of discourse-featured texts showed significant differences in the representations that they contained in terms of their affective marking. Further research into the relationship between genre and cultural representation, that is specific information on types of social behaviour according to genre would be a valuable area of future research. There was not enough information on the web pages relating to author identity and publication date to be able to analyse the data for author culture-specific orientation or change across time. Both of these would also be possible future avenues of research.

The second main research question focussed on the relationship between the cultural representations held by the discourse community and those held by members of the community who are subject matter for that discourse community. In a survey, students, as members of the Portuguese business community, were questioned as to the cultural representations they have of their own community as well as those they believe others have of them. Although much of the open response from this subject group did refer to the opinions of others, it was not statistically possible to separate the other responses in the questionnaire into those that students believe of themselves and those that they believe others believe. Future research might focus on this distinction as well as other sub-groups of the target community.

However, in several significant areas, it has been shown that students do have some very different cultural representations of their own community when compared to those present in online discourse. These differences are quantitative and also qualitative in two main ways. Firstly, students tend to be more negative in their representations, giving more emphasis to those social behaviours which illustrate unfavourable aspects of Portuguese life. In contrast, the online discourse is quantitatively far more positive in terms of representations of social behaviour. Qualitatively, this online discourse also focuses much more, in general terms, on the intercultural competence of the Portuguese business community and far less on systemic and professional practices that the students see as being far more prevalent. These differences, which are both quantifiable and qualifiable and which may or may not reflect the reality of life in Portugal, do reflect differences which are likely to be encountered in initial intercultural exchanges. In the

future the students will hopefully be better placed to deal with such exchanges as the data is fed into teaching syllabuses.

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